

SOME GLIMPSES OF
OCCULTISM,
ANCIENT AND
MODERN

BY
C. W. LEADBEATER

1903

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SOME GLIMPSES OF OCCULTISM

The Convention of the American Section of the Theosophical Society at Chicago, Illinois, in September, 1902, at which I had the privilege of being present, was for me the starting-point of a two years' lecturing tour throughout the United States in the interests of that Section of the Society – a tour patiently and laboriously planned and worked out down to the minutest detail with loving and painstaking care by its late and indefatigable General Secretary, Mr. Alexander Fullerton.

It was determined that before visiting the Branches in the far West I should spend six months in Chicago, delivering a course of twenty-six lectures in Steinway Hall on the Sunday evenings, and speaking at the Branch meetings during the week. This course of lectures was designed to put before the public in broad outline some of the principal teachings of Theosophy, and also to help men to realize something of its scope and comprehensiveness by showing how wonderfully all else is included in it – how it is the mighty truth underlying all systems of religious thought, even those which differ as much on the physical plane as do Buddhism, Christianity and the Ancient Mysteries, and how also it offers the only rational and coherent explanation of the phenomena connected with clairvoyance, telepathy, mesmerism, spiritualism, dreams and apparitions. The titles of the lectures were as follows:

List of Subjects

1902

1. October 5. Man and His Bodies
2. October 12. The Necessity of Reincarnation
3. October 19. The Law of Cause and Effect
4. October 26 Life After Death – Purgatory
5. November 2. Life After Death – Heaven
6. November 9. The Nature of Theosophical Proof

- 7. November 16. Telepathy and Mind Cure
- 8. November 23. Invisible Helpers
- 9. November 30. Clairvoyance – What it is
- 10. December 7. Clairvoyance – In Space
- 11. December 14. Clairvoyance – In Time
- 12. December 21. Clairvoyance – How it is Developed
- 13. December 28. Theosophy and Christianity

1903

- 14. January 4. Ancient and Modern Buddhism
- 15. January 11. Theosophy and Spiritualism
- 16. January 18. The Rationale of Apparitions
- 17. January 25. Dreams
- 18. February 1. The Rationale of Mesmerism
- 19. February 8. Magic, White and Black
- 20. February 15. Use and Abuse of Psychic Powers
- 21. February 22. The Ancient Mysteries
- 22. March 1. Vegetarianism and Occultism
- 23. March 8. The Birth and Growth of the Soul
- 24. March 15. How to Build Character
- 25. March 22. Theosophy in Every-day Life

26. March 29.

The Future that awaits us



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTORY

The Other Side of Death. The lecture on Invisible Helpers, the four upon Clairvoyance, and that upon Dreams are fully represented by books of my own already published, and bearing the same titles as the lectures. Nos. 1 to 7 inclusive have also been published in pamphlet form. The remainder appear in this book, with the exception of No. 23, which was practically an epitome of certain chapters from Man Visible and Invisible and The Christian Creed, and dealt briefly with a subject which is fully and ably treated by Mrs. Besant in The Birth and Evolution of the Soul. No. 18 is presentation of its subject largely summarized from Mr. A.P. Sinnett's book of the same name, to which readers should turn for further particulars.

The course of lectures as a whole offered a popular and necessarily somewhat superficial exposition from the Theosophical standpoint of most of the manifestations of occultism known to the Western world at the present day, and it gave also a few glimpses into the fuller and more perfect manifestations which were current two thousand years ago. It seems to me, therefore, that these lectures may perhaps be of some use to our members, as offering them a starting point for their thought along all these various lines, and it is with that hope that I am putting them before our Society in this form. They appear here almost as they were delivered, except that, now they are all brought together, some repetitions are excised, and a few quotations are given more fully than in the original lecture. I have made no attempt to recast them from the lecture style into the essay style, as that would have needed far more time than can be given during a somewhat arduous tour, and would therefore have indefinitely delayed their appearance in print.

The lecture on The Unseen World was delivered during a previous visit to Chicago, but it is included here because it is to some extent a synthesis of some of those earlier lectures of the series which are fully published elsewhere, and so it serves as a useful introduction to many of those that follow it. The Gospel of Wisdom was delivered in connection with the Convention to which I have previously referred, before the first lecture of this series; but I have placed it at the end, instead of at the beginning, because it seems to fall naturally into place there, and concludes my book with the strong assertion of a fact whose proclamation I believe to be one great part of the mission of Theosophy to the Western world – the mighty

truth that all things are working together for the final good of all, that the great Divine Father means us to be happy, and that we shall be so in proportion to our knowledge of His will and our glad co-operation with its action.



ANCIENT

CHAPTER 2. THEOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY

Many persons who feel themselves attracted towards Theosophy, whose interest is aroused by its reasonableness and by the manner in which it accounts for many things which otherwise seem inexplicable, yet hesitate to take up its study more deeply, lest they should presently find it contradicting the faith in which they have been brought up – lest, as they often put it, it should take away from them their religion. How, if a religion be true, the study of another truth can take it away, is not clear; but, however illogical the fear may be, there is no doubt that it exists. It is nevertheless unwarranted, for Theosophy neither attacks nor opposes any form of religion; on the contrary, it explains and harmonizes all. It holds that all religions alike are attempts to state the same great underlying truths – differing in external form and in nomenclature, because they were delivered by different teachers, at different periods of the world's history, and to widely different races of men; but always agreeing in fundamentals, and giving identical instruction upon every subject of real importance. We hold in Theosophy that this truth which lies at the back of all these faiths alike is itself within the reach of man, and indeed it is to that very truth that we give the name of Theosophy, or Divine Wisdom, and it is that which we are trying to study.

This, then, is the attitude of Theosophy towards all religions; it does not contradict them, but explains them. Whatever in any of them is unreasonable or obviously untrue it rejects as necessarily unworthy of the Deity and derogatory to Him; whatever is reasonable in each and all of them it takes up and emphasizes, and thus combines all into one harmonious whole. No man need fear that we shall attack his religion, but we may help him to understand it better than he did before. There is nothing in Theosophy which is in any way in opposition to true primitive Christianity, though it may not always be possible to agree with the interpretation put upon that truth by modern dogmatic theology, which is quite another matter.

Most people never apply their reason to their religious beliefs at all; they vaguely hope that it is all right somehow; indeed, many faithful souls consider it wrong to think critically upon any point of faith, for they suppose these things to be greater than human understanding. When

people do begin to think, they invariably begin to doubt, because modern theology does not present its doctrines reasonably, and so they soon find that many points are irrational and incomprehensible. Too often they then feel that their whole basis of faith is undermined, and they proceed to doubt everything. To all such souls struggling for light I would recommend the study of Theosophy, for I am convinced that it will save them from the dark abysses of materialism by presenting truth to them in a new light, and giving back to them all that is most beautiful in their faith, but on a new and surer basis of reason and common-sense.

In order that it may be clear to you that there is in reality no opposition between Christianity and Theosophy, let me put before you the basic principles of the latter; that you may not suppose that I am clothing them in an unusually Christian dress for the purposes of this lecture, I will quote them from a little book which I have recently written for beginners in this study. It is called *An Outline of Theosophy*, and in it I give three great basic truths, certain corollaries which follow from them, and then the results which in turn proceed from Theosophical belief.

THE THREE GREAT TRUTHS.

The three great truths are:-

1. God exists, and He is good.
2. Man is immortal, and his future is one whose glory and splendour have no limit.
3. A divine law of absolute justice rules the world, so that each man is in truth his own judge, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

To each of these great truths are attached certain others, subsidiary and explanatory. From the first of them it follows:

1. That, in spite of all appearances, all things are definitely and intelligently moving together for good; that all circumstances, however untoward they may seem, are in reality exactly what are needed; that everything around us tends, not to hinder us, but to help us, if it be only understood.

2. That, since the whole scheme thus tends to man's benefit, it is clearly his duty to learn to understand it.

3. That when he thus understands it, it is also his duty intelligently to co-operate in this scheme.

From the second great truth it follows:

1. That the true man is a soul, and that this body is only an appanage.

2. That he must therefore regard everything from the standpoint of the soul, and that in every case when an internal struggle takes place he must realize his identity with the higher and not with the lower.

3. That what we commonly call his life is only one day in his true and larger life.

4. That death is a matter of far less importance than is usually supposed, since it is by no means the end of life, but merely the passage from one stage of it to another.

5. That man has an immense evolution behind him, the study of which is most fascinating, interesting and instructive.

6. That he also has a splendid evolution before him, the study of which will be even more fascinating and instructive.

7. That there is an absolute certainty of final attainment for every human soul, no matter how far he may seem to have strayed from the path of evolution.

From the third great truth it follows:

1. That every thought, word or action produces its definite result – not a reward or a punishment imposed from without, but a result inherent in the action itself, definitely connected with it in the relation of cause and effect, these being really but two inseparable parts of one whole.

2. That it is both the duty and interest of man to study the divine law closely, so that he may be able to adapt himself to it and to use it, as we use other great laws of nature.

3. That it is necessary for man to attain perfect control over himself, so that he may guide his life intelligently in accordance with the law.

This is not a Theosophical creed which I am formulating, for these principles are not put forward as articles of faith, but are stated as definite facts, known to be such through personal investigation by many of us, and verifiable by all who are willing to take the trouble to qualify themselves for the study. We are not asking you to accept anything more than we ourselves know to be true. Here and there, it is true, we touch upon matters too high for any direct knowledge that we who are students as yet possess; in such cases, any statements which we make are on the authority of other and older students who know much more than we; but when that is so, we always say so definitely, keep clear the distinction between that which we ourselves know and that which we only believe, even though we believe it on the best possible authority. We simply present the system for your consideration; if it seems to you reasonable, take it and examine it thoroughly, study it and live the life which it recommends. Since that life is a noble one, no harm can come to you from trying such an experiment.

Is There any Contradiction?

These then are the principles of Theosophy; do they in any way contradict those of Christianity? I venture to say that there is nothing in them which is at all in opposition to the true primitive Christianity when it is properly understood, though there may be statements which cannot be reconciled with some of the mistakes of modern popular theology. Let me try to show you how this is so. The principal points in this scheme of ours to which modern orthodoxy would take exception are the implied doctrines of reincarnation and karma – the latter meaning the Divine law of eternal justice under which every man must inevitably bear the consequences of his own misdoings, and no one else can under any circumstances relieve him of his responsibility.

Modern theology attaches immense importance to texts; in fact, it appears to me to be based upon one or two texts almost entirely. It takes

these and gives to them a particular interpretation, often in direct opposition to the plain meaning of other texts from the same bible. Of course there are contradictions in the bible, just as there must necessarily be in any book of that size, its various books being written at such widely separated periods of the world's history, and by people so unequal in knowledge and in civilization. It is impossible that all these statements can be literally true, but we can go back behind them all, and try to find out what the original teacher did lay before his pupils. Since there are many contradictions and many interpretations, it is obviously the duty of a thinking Christian to weigh carefully the different versions of his faith which exist in the world, and decide according to his own reason and common-sense. Every Christian does as a matter of fact decide for himself now; he chooses to be a Roman Catholic, or a member of the Church of England, or a Methodist, or a Salvationist, though each of these sects professes to have the only genuine brand of Christianity, and justifies its claim by quotation of texts. How then does the ordinary layman decide between their rival claims? Either he accepts blindly the faith which his father held, and does not examine at all, or else he does examine, and then he decides by the exercise of his own judgment. If he is already doing that, it would be absurd and inconsistent for him to refuse to examine all texts, instead of basing his belief only upon one or two. If he does impartially examine all texts, he will certainly find many which support Theosophical truths.

How Divergence Arises.

Do not think that you are disloyal to the Founder of Christianity if you admit the existence of different interpretations and the possibility of error in all of them. Divergence always happens of necessity in the growth of every religion. If you think of it impartially, you will see that it must be so. In every one of them there is always first the Teacher himself, putting forth his presentation of the truth with all the force of direct personal knowledge, surrounded by disciples whose enthusiasm is stirred by their contact with him, so that they feel a certainty not inferior to his own. Perhaps some of them under the influence of his magnetism develop the power to see many truths at first-hand for themselves. In time the Teacher leaves them, and the generation of his disciples dies out. The religion is carried on by their followers in turn, and these have usually no direct personal access to the truth, but mould their faith upon the doctrine given by those who preceded them. Presently this doctrine

comes to be written down, lest it should be forgotten or distorted, and so a scripture arises. It is not easy so to write that it shall be impossible for man to misunderstand, and thus presently arise various interpretations. Naturally different teachers interpret in various ways, and thus sects come into existence, and bitterness of feeling arises between them. A church grows up – a body of men who consider that they alone hold this new truth, whose direct interest it is to maintain a certain interpretation of it. Presently this new church acquires property, and thus vested interests are established, and considerations entirely foreign to the true religious spirit (and often indeed entirely hostile to it) are inevitably introduced. Then crystallization ensues, and with that we have narrowness, bigotry, worldliness and consequent degradation; and all this not from any especial vice or carelessness on the part of any one concerned, but in the natural course of history.

We may see how this has happened with Hinduism and with Buddhism; if we can only look with an impartial eye, we shall see how it has happened with Christianity also, though I know that many good orthodox people would consider it wicked and atheistic to say so; but surely it cannot be wicked to state what is true as shown in the pages of history. Since this was obviously the case, if we wish to discover and study the true Christianity we must go back to the original doctrines, and see how the teachings were interpreted in the earlier times. If we do this we shall find that the faith taught then was by no means the iron-bound theology of the present day, but a far more spiritual and philosophical religion, corresponding in many points with the truth that lies behind all religions, which we now study under the name of Theosophy.

Reincarnation

As I have said, the principal points in that outline of Theosophy to which exception would be taken by the orthodox theologian are those of reincarnation and of the inevitable and automatic action of Divine justice. Neither of these doctrines is held by the church of the present day, yet I think we shall find a certain amount of evidence that they were not unknown during the earlier periods. Few direct reference to the doctrine of reincarnation are to be found in the scriptures as we now have them, but there are one or two which are unmistakable. There is one clear definite statement by Jesus himself, which of course must settle the question once for all for any one believes in the gospel history and in the

inspiration of the scriptures. When he has been speaking of John the Baptist, and enquiring what opinions were generally held about him, he terminates the conversation by the emphatic pronouncement "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." (Matthew XI 14)

I am aware that the orthodox theologian thinks that Jesus did not mean what he said in this case, and wishes us to believe that he was endeavouring to explain that Elias had been a type of John the Baptist. But in reply to such a disingenuous plea it will be sufficient to ask what would be the thought of any one who in ordinary life tried to explain away a statement in so clumsy a fashion. Christ knew what was the popular opinion with reference to such matters; he knew that he himself was supposed by the common people to be a reincarnation sometimes of Elijah, sometimes of Jeremiah, and sometimes of one of the other prophets (Matthew xvi, 14); and he was aware that the return of Elijah had been prophesied and that all the common people were in constant expectation of his advent. Consequently in making a direct statement such as this he cannot but have known exactly all his hearers would understand him. "If ye will receive it" – that is to say, if you can believe it – "this man is the very Elijah whom you are expecting." That is an unequivocal statement, and to suppose that when Christ said that he did not mean it, but instead intended to express something vague and symbolical, is to accuse him of wilfully misleading the people by giving to them a direct statement which he must unquestionably have known that they could take only in one way. Either Christ said this or he did not say it; if he did not say it, what becomes of the inspiration of the gospel? If he did say it, then reincarnation is a fact.

Another reference to this doctrine occurs in the story of the man who was born blind, and was brought to Jesus to be cured. The disciples enquired: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John ix. 2.). This question implies belief in a large proportion of the Theosophical doctrine in the minds of those who asked it. You will note that they clearly hold to the idea of cause and effect and of Divine justice. Here was the case of a man born blind – a terrible affliction, of course, both for the child himself and for his parents. The disciples realized that this must be the result of some sin or folly; and their question is as to whose sin it was that had brought about this deplorable result. Was it that the father had been so wicked that he deserved to have the sorrow of a blind son; or was it that in some previous state of existence the man

himself had sinned, and so brought upon himself this pitiable fate? Obviously, if the latter were the true solution the sins which deserved this punishment must have been committed before he was born – that is to say in a previous life; so that in fact both the great pillars of Theosophical teaching to which we have referred are clearly implied in this one question.

The answer of Jesus is noteworthy. We know that on other occasions he was by no means backward in commenting vigorously upon inaccurate doctrine or practice; he spoke strongly on many occasions to the Scribes and Pharisees and others. If therefore reincarnation and the idea of Divine justice were false and foolish beliefs, we should certainly expect to find him taking this opportunity to rebuke his disciples for holding them; yet we notice that he does nothing of the kind.

He accepts their suggestions as matters of course; he does not reprove them in any way, but explains that neither of the hypotheses which they suggest is the true cause of the affliction in this particular case; “neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”

Years ago an English clergyman wrote a remarkable book called *From Death to the Judgment Day*, in which he showed that reincarnation was the great secret teaching of the Christian religion, which cleared up all its difficulties and made it into a coherent and rational system. Quite lately a Methodist minister in America has published a book called *Birth a New Chance*, in which he argues the same question, though along different lines. His theory of rebirth only partially agrees with ours, since he denies that the soul has at present any intelligent existence apart from its successive physical bodies; but it is interesting to find that along such different lines of thought men of various shades of opinion are beginning to see the necessity of this fundamental doctrine.

A paragraph from the former book is worth quoting here, as showing how the idea of reincarnation strikes a thoughtful and unprejudiced orthodox Christian, “Scripture distinctly asserts that we shall be judged and rewarded or condemned, according to our actions committed on this earth. . . therefore, we cannot suppose later conditions to be superior to the conditions under which we now exist, for that would necessitate the advancement of those doomed to eternal punishment to a more glorious

life, from which they must ultimately be degraded to everlasting shame; neither can we suppose them to be inferior to those which we now enjoy, for that would degrade the virtuous; nor can we suppose separate states one of advancement for the virtuous, and one of retrogression for the wicked, for that would be to create a hell inhabited by evil creatures doomed to pursue evil before the final judgment; all these suppositions anticipate the final judgment; no authority can be found in scripture to support any of them. It is therefore evident that if there is any active existence for the soul after death, the conditions under which it must exist cannot differ from those under which it exists on earth. Since these conditions cannot differ from our present condition, we are drawn to the inevitable conclusion that they must be the same; that if there be any existence for the soul after death, it must be in a human body on this earth. The conclusion arrived at is that after death the soul goes again through the process of birth, and appears on earth in the body of an infant; that the time between death and the judgment day will be passed in successive lives on earth." The author then undertakes to show "not only that this conclusion is authorized by scripture, but also that all the doctrines of the Christian faith are based on it; that it is the key-note of Christ's teaching, the reason of our existence on this earth, and the only means by which we can eventually attain salvation." Again he adds; "If this theory be accepted, the belief of the Universalists (that all will eventually be saved) becomes possible." – (From Death to Judgment Day, by Gerald D'Arcy, p.13)

Furthermore, it relieves us of many and great difficulties. Think of the terrible inequality in the world. If we look around us in any great city we shall see some living in luxury and others starving, some who have all kinds of advantages in the way of higher teaching, of art and music and philosophy to develop the moral side of their natures, and others who are living in the midst of criminality, who have practically no chance whatever of moral progress in this incarnation. Take the case of a child who is born in one of the slums of a great city, born in an atmosphere of crime, from a father who is a drunkard and a mother who is a thief. That child from the day of his birth has never seen anything but crime and sin; he has never seen the bright side of life in the least, and he knows nothing at all of any religion. What chance of progress has he that is in any way equal to the chance that we ourselves have had? What is the advantage to that child of all our music, our art, our literature and philosophy? If you could suddenly snatch him out of those surroundings, and put him among us, he

would not in the least understand our life, because he has not been brought up to it. His opportunity is assuredly not in any sense equal to ours. If you go outside the pale of civilization you will still find savage races existing in various parts of the world; what of their opportunities? It is not conceivable that those men can develop as fully as we. How is this to be accounted for?

The Three Hypotheses

There are three possible hypotheses – three possible theories of life. First, there is the materialistic hypothesis that there is no scheme of life at all, that we are simply ruled by blind chance; we are born by chance and we die by chance, and when we die that is the end of us. That is not a particularly satisfactory theory, not one which we should desire to accept unless we found ourselves forced to it. But are we so forced? I think not; in fact, all the evidence tells distinctly in the opposite direction. What is the use of all this progress that we see taking place around us if it is not working towards a definite end?

The second hypothesis is that of Divine caprice, the theory that God puts one man here and another there because He chooses to do so, and that, although their opportunities of progress are utterly unequal, their eternal destiny hereafter nevertheless depends in all cases upon their success in achieving a high level of morality. This theory makes no attempt to account for the inequalities in earth-life, and offers precisely the same heavenly reward to all of the small number who are supposed to attain it at all, quite irrespective of the amount of suffering endured here. Some modification of this theory is at present suggested by most of the Occidental forms of religion, though it is by no means the true and original teaching of Christianity.

Certainly it would seem to a thinking man that a God who has put us in a position amid respectable surroundings in which we could not easily go far wrong, and at the same time has put another man in a situation such as we have described, where it is almost impossible for him to do right, can hardly be a just deity. Indeed some of most deeply religious of men have felt themselves sorrowfully forced to admit that either God is not all-powerful, and cannot help the misery and sin which we see in the world about us, or else that He is not all-good, and does not care about the sufferings of His creatures. In Theosophy we hold most firmly that He is

both all-loving and all-powerful, and we reconcile this belief with the facts of life around us by means of this doctrine of reincarnation. I know of no other theory through which such reconciliation is possible; and surely the only hypothesis which allows us rationally, and without shutting our eyes to obvious facts, to hold the belief that God is an all-powerful and all-loving Father is at least worthy of careful examination, before we cast it contemptuously aside in order to blazon forth our conviction that He does not possess those qualities. Observe that there is absolutely no other alternative; either reincarnation is true, or the idea of Divine justice is nothing but a dream.

How does orthodoxy deal with so weighty a consideration as this? Usually it scarcely attempts to deal with it at all, but contents itself with vaguely remarking that God's justice is not as man's justice. That is probably true; but at least Divine justice must be greater than ours, and not less; it must be an extension of ours, including considerations which are beyond our reach – not something falling so far short of ours as to involve atrocities which even we who are only men would never think of committing.

But what is our third hypothesis? What does the theory of reincarnation suggest to us? That the life of man is a far longer life that we have supposed; that man is a soul and has a body, and that what we have called his life is but one day in the true and greater life of that soul. Man rises in the morning, and learns the lesson of his day, and when he is tired he lies down to sleep; and the next day he comes back again like a child to school, and learns another lesson. The body is nothing but the dress which he puts on when he is ready to go out for the day's work at school, and lays aside when that day's work is over in order to enjoy greater freedom during his rest at home. For each day he has a new body, and again and again he revisits earth to learn more and more of these lessons, to acquire new and higher qualities, and so evolution proceeds.

Thus we realize that less evolved souls are simply children in a lower class, and that they are not to be regarded as wicked or backsliding, but only as younger brothers. Think of the child at the kindergarten; he practically plays most of the time. They do not set him at once to the higher schoolwork, because at that stage he could not understand it, and such teaching would be useless and injurious to him. Just the same thing is true with regard to a soul; it could not receive the higher teaching at first. It must begin with the stronger, coarser impacts from without, which reach

it in savage life; it must be stirred by those vigorous and insistent shakings before it can learn to respond to the finer vibrations at higher levels which in advanced civilization will afford it such varied opportunities of rapid development. So by slow degrees and through many lives that soul will reach our own lever; but it does not stop there. There have been many men in the world who have stood head and shoulders above their fellows; they show us what we shall be, and they are in themselves a proof of reincarnation, for there is no conceivable single life that could evolve a savage into an Emerson, a Plato or a Shakespeare. If we accept reincarnation we can account rationally for the existence side by side in the world of the criminal and the philosopher – but on no other hypothesis can this be done.

To understand it fully we must take along with it the other great Theosophical doctrine of Karma, the law of cause and effect, and realize that if a man disturbs the equilibrium of Nature it will press back upon him with exactly the same force that he himself employed. It is under this law that he is being reborn; if he finds himself in certain surroundings, it is because he has so acted in a former life as to bring himself under these conditions. He has made his place for himself, and he is receiving not only exactly what he has deserved, but also just such training as it best for his evolution.

This great intrinsic part of the Theosophical doctrine must never be forgotten. Though the man does not bring over with him in his memory the details of his previous life, his soul does bear within it the qualities developed in that life, so that he is precisely what he has made himself, and no effort is ever lost. Thus the whole of the world is one mighty graded course of evolution. When the savage has had as many lives and as much experience as we have had, he will probably stand where we do; for thousands of years ago we stood exactly where he now is. It is simply that he is younger, and we should no more blame him for that than we blame a child of five because he is not yet ten.

Observe also how blessed is the consolation of realizing that we have all eternity before us in which to develop. Christ's command to his disciples was: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," but if we face the facts we must admit that we cannot become perfect in one life. Only in this doctrine of many lives is there any possibility that this command can ever be obeyed. But with the infinite opportunity which reincarnation

gives us, surely we also shall grow onward and upward, till we reach the level of the saints and sages, the philosophers and the saviours of mankind. But it is only in the knowledge of the wider life that we see this to be possible – nay, not possible only, but certain.

Among the early fathers of the church it will be found that this doctrine was at least to some extent understood. Direct references to it are few, but that may well have been because it was regarded rather as one of the secret teachings than as something to be spoken of openly or in public. As to this secret doctrine I shall have a few words to say presently; but let me for a moment pass on to the consideration of the other great doctrine of Divine justice.

The Law of Cause and Effect

Since these words are frequently upon the lips of the professors of religion, it might perhaps be thought at first sight that we should have no need to vindicate to them our teaching of this law of justice. Yet assuredly a great deal of the religious teaching of the present day distinctly includes a theory that we may escape from the consequence of our actions; indeed modern theology concerns itself principally with a plan for evading Divine justice, which it elects to call “salvation”; and it makes this plan depend entirely upon what a man believes, or rather upon what he says that he believes. The whole theory of “salvation,” and indeed the idea that there is anything to be “saved” from, seems to be based upon a misunderstanding of a few texts of scripture. In Theosophy we do not believe in the idea of so-called Divine wrath; we think that to attribute to God our own vices of anger and cruelty is a terrible blasphemy. It may often happen that a man gives way to wrath, yet on reflection he knows that he was wrong in doing so; and it seems to us that to believe the eternal and all-loving Father to be guilty of actions which even we realize to be improper is a terrible degradation of the great divine ideal. It seems to be a relic of primitive savagery and fetish-worship – of the idea that the principal powers in nature are evil demons who require propitiation. In Theosophy our reverence for the Deity is far too great to allow us to accept anything so derogatory to His dignity. Instead of this debasing superstition we have the certainty that God is an omnipotent and all-loving Father, and that His will is directed, not towards our condemnation, but towards our evolution. We hold the theory of steady

development and final attainment for all; and we think that the man's progress depends, not upon what he believes, but upon what he does.

And surely there is much in the Christian scriptures which supports this idea. You may perhaps remember the solemn and earnest warning which St. Paul gave to the Galatians, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to them – a warning which might well have been written specially for the modern theologian, who propounds the amazing injustice of a vicarious atonement: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Again in writing to the Romans he speaks of "the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." Not only does the apostle speak thus, but his Master also teaches the same doctrine. You will remember how in the fifth chapter of the gospel according to St. John he states that "they that have done good shall come forth into the resurrection of life" – not those who have believed some particular doctrine.

Another striking point is to be found in the description which Christ gives of the last judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of the gospel according to St. Mathew. Since, according to theological teaching, he is himself to be the judge on this occasion, surely his account of the proceedings must be correct, and his explanation of the basis upon which the decisions will be given must be accurate and conclusive. He describes how all nations shall be brought before the king, and how they shall be divided into two great classes, some on the right hand and some on the left hand, and the reasons for the classification are clearly and distinctly given. From the study of modern theology we should expect that the one great question upon the answer to which all would turn must inevitably be "Have you believed in Christ, or in certain doctrines? or "Have you accepted the teachings of the church?"

The orthodox believer must be surprised to note that neither of these questions seems to enter into the matter at all; not one word is asked by Christ as to what these people have believed, or whether they even now believe in anything whatever. The decision is based not upon belief, but upon action – not upon the doctrines which they have held, but upon what they have done. The only question raised is whether they have fed the hungry, have clothed the naked, have helped the stranger and those who were in sick and in trouble – that is to say whether they have done their duty towards their neighbors in a compassionate and charitable

spirit. It is perfectly obvious that according to this account of the Day of Judgment – again remember, it is an account given by the judge himself – a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Muhammadan, a so-called heathen of any type whatever, would have just as good a chance of attaining the eternal life of heaven as the most bigoted Christian sectarian. It would almost seem that the modern theologian does not read his bible at all; or rather it would seem that he has his attention so exclusively fixed upon certain texts, and the deductions which he and his predecessors have drawn from them, that he becomes entirely blind to the plain straightforward signification of many other texts of equal importance.

The Inner Teaching

It may be said, however, that at any rate in the present day these doctrines of reincarnation and of perfect justice are not taught in any of the churches; how is that to be accounted for? We reply that this is because Christianity has forgotten much of its own original teaching – because it is now satisfied with only part, and that a very small part, of what it originally knew. It may be argued that at least the Church possesses the original scriptures, and that the teaching derived from these writing should therefore not have varied. As has been shown, the modern teaching appears to be based exclusively upon certain fragments of these scriptures wrested from their context, and so treated as to contradict many other passages. From these few misapplied texts an insecure edifice of unreasonable doctrine is built, and the original teaching of the early Church is to a great extent neglected.

These very scriptures themselves tell us constantly of something more than is written in them – something more than was ever given to the public. It is the fashion in these days to deny that there could ever have been any esoteric teaching in Christianity; indeed its present professors make a boast of the idea that it contains nothing which cannot be comprehended by the meanest intellect, and laid open in its fullness to the most ignorant. If this boast were founded upon fact, it would be a most serious reproach against Christianity; for it would mean that this religion had nothing to offer to the thinking man. Every great religion has always recognized the fact that it had to deal with many different classes of men, and that it was necessary that it should be able to meet them all at their various levels.

A religion has to provide for large numbers of simple and uneducated people, incapable of comprehending a high system of philosophy or metaphysics; consequently it must have a plain and straightforward scheme of ethical teaching, instructing these people how to live, and clearly and strongly putting before them the fact that according to the nature of their lives here and now will be their happiness or their suffering hereafter. But there will be many to whom this alone is far from satisfactory – whose minds will seek for a great scheme in the Universe, who will enquire how man comes to be what he is, and what is the future that lies before him. The answers to all these questions will inevitably involve much that would be entirely incomprehensible to the simple faith of the unlearned; indeed it may well be that much of this higher teaching would tend only to confuse and to mislead the man who was not yet ready for it.

Furthermore, knowledge is always power; and therefore a thorough acquaintance with these higher facts places in the hands of the student the capacity to do much more than the ignorant can do, either for evil or for good. From this again it follows inevitably that circumspection must be used in setting forth in its fullness this higher teaching; and certain guarantees may well be required by the teachers that those who receive it shall use it only for the good of mankind. In every religion of the world there has always been this higher and, to some extent secret teaching; is it to be supposed that Christianity is the only exception to this rule? If it were so, Christianity would stand self-convicted as an imperfect religion; but the truth is that it is not so, for Christianity also has had its mysteries and its inner teachings, and naturally these inner teachings are precisely the same as those of all the other faiths of the world, since all of them are endeavors to state from different points of view the great Truth which lies behind all of them alike.

References to it.

It is true that this secret teaching appears to be now lost, at any rate as far as what are commonly called Protestant sects are concerned. Yet we cannot but see even in the scriptures which remain to us many hints at the existence of this higher knowledge. What is meant, for example, by Christ's constant references to the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, by his frequent statements to his disciples that the full and true interpretation could be given only to them, and that to others he must

speak in parable? Again, he uses technical terms connected with the well-known Mystery teaching of antiquity; and it is only by some comprehension of that teaching that we are able in many cases to find a reasonable significance for his utterances.

This question as to the existence of an esoteric side in Christianity is not one of sentiment, but of fact; and it is useless for those who do not wish to believe it to clamour against the plain and obvious meaning of the documents of history. The best way to approach this subject is to see first of all what Christ himself said which bears upon it, then to take the evidence in the writings of his immediate successors, the Apostles, and then to see whether the same idea shows itself in the Church Fathers who followed the Apostles. I think that in all these cases an unprejudiced examination will convince the student that the secret teaching did exist, and was well known to all of them. There were originally many more gospels than the four which now remain to us, and even these four have probably passed through many mutilating hands before they settled down into their present form; yet even in them traces still remain which it would be difficult for the most bigoted to deny.

Jesus himself speaks on several occasions with no uncertain voice. For example, in the fourth chapter of the gospel according to St. Mark you will find the statement:-“ And when he was alone they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, ‘Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables.’” And a few verses further down you will find the statement:- “But without a parable spake he not unto them; and when they were alone he explained all things to his disciples.” These words are quoted later by Origen as referring to the secret teaching preserved in the church; for it was always held by the Fathers that such statements contained a triple meaning – first of all the obvious surface meaning, generally cast into the form of some sort of story, so that it might be the more easily remembered; secondly, an intellectual interpretation, such as that which is given to the parable of the sower in the chapter from which I have quoted; and thirdly, a deep mystic and spiritual meaning which was never written down under any circumstances, but was explained orally by the teacher under promises of secrecy.

Again you will note how, in the sixteenth chapter of the gospel according to St. John, Christ tell his disciples "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Remember that this was said, according to the story, on the night before his death. When then did he say to his disciples the many things which had still to be revealed to them?

Obviously it must have been after his resurrection, during the time when we are told that he remained with his disciples "speaking to them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." No record is given to us in the scriptures of any of these teachings; yet it is impossible to suppose that they would be forgotten. Assuredly they must have been handed on as among the most precious of traditions, not in writing but orally, just as the secret teachings in all religions have been handed on. In one of the great Gnostic gospels, the "Pistis Sophia," we are told that he appeared among his disciples, not for forty days only, but for eleven years after his resurrection; and some hint is given as to the nature of the teachings which he imparted, though much of it is so involved and mystical as to be difficult of comprehension without the key of knowledge which comes with initiation.

The Kingdom of Heaven

This very name of "the Kingdom of God" or "the Kingdom of Heaven" which is used in the passage just quoted is itself a technical term belonging to the Mysteries, indicating the body of those who are initiated into them. Again and again you will find evidence of this if you will look with unprejudiced eye at the passages in which Jesus himself mentions it. For example, in the thirteenth chapter of the gospel according to St. Luke we read that the question is put to the Christ; "Are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.'" The ordinary uneducated "Protestant" actually dares to apply this statement to the gate of heaven, and wishes us to believe that a great world-Saviour would teach his people that for many men who earnestly seek to be saved from the horrible invention of eternal damnation, there shall yet be no path to safety. If this could be supposed to be true, the statement would be shocking beyond words, for it would show either that the Deity was incapable of managing the affairs of His universe, or else that the whole scheme was in the hands of a mocking and cruel demon. No such atrocity was asserted by the Christ, or could ever have been put forth by him.

The word “saved” – or rather, as it should be written, “safe” – has a technical meaning which when it is understood makes the passage clear and illuminative. To the Theosophical student there will be no difficulty in its perfect comprehension; he knows that in the course of human evolution a period will eventually be reached when a considerable portion of humanity will for a time drop out of our present scheme, simply because they have not yet developed themselves enough to be able to take advantage of the opportunities which will then be opening before mankind, - because under the conditions then prevailing no incarnations of a sufficient unadvanced type to suit them will be available. The men who thus fall out of the current of progress for the time will presently take up the work again along with another human evolution, and so will have an opportunity of going over again the different stages of the development of which they have failed fully to avail themselves on this occasion. This is in reality a most merciful provision of nature to help along those who for various reasons are backward in their studies in the school of life; and though they lose the place that they have held in this particular evolution, it is only because the evolution has passed beyond them, and it would have been a mere waste of time for them to attempt to stay in it any longer. The man to whom this happens is in the position of a child at school who is hopelessly behind his classmates. To continue to work with them would mean only strain and fatigue and waste of time for him; while to leave that class and to work with the one next below it will not only be easier for him, but will enable him by further practice to learn thoroughly those lessons which so far he has been unable to master.

The ordinary man is by no means as yet above the level at which it might be possible for him thus to have to drop out; but the pupil who has taken the first great initiation – “who has entered upon the stream,” as is said in the East – is safe from any danger of such delay; and so he is often spoken of as “the saved,” or “the elect.” It is in this sense, and this sense only, that we are to understand the use of the word “saved,” either here or elsewhere in the scriptures and in the creeds; and when we comprehend this, we shall at once see the force and truth of the remark of the Christ that the gate of initiation is strait and difficult of entry and that there will be many who will strive to reach it for a long time before they are able to attain it.

The Road that leads to Life.

Another passage which confirms this is to be found in the seventh chapter of the gospel according to St. Mathew, in which Christ once more advises his disciples, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Here again the occult student has no difficulty in recognizing a familiar imagery. He knows well how narrow and difficult is the way which leads to that "eternal life" which means the avoidance of the necessity of birth and death – that is to say, of the descent into incarnation. He knows too how broad and comparatively easy is the slow line of progress adopted by the ordinary man which leads him to death and to birth many thousands of times before it conducts him to a permanent residence upon higher levels. It is indeed true that "many there be who walk" in this longer but smoother road; and there are at present but few among humanity who find the shorter but steeper path of initiation. Read in this, its obvious sense, the statement is true and comprehensible; but if we are to take it in the sense that the "strait gate" leads to heaven, and that only few are able to enter there, it is not only a barbarous misrepresentation of the facts, but it is in flat contradiction to other texts in which the heaven-world is clearly intended.

When the biblical scribe is really attempting to picture the heaven-world we find that he speaks of "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, who stood before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands." Initiated writers have always known the grand truth that there is no possibility of final destruction, but the certainty of eventual success for all, because that is God's will for them. In this sense, as referring to their ultimate destiny, there is no feeble hope that a few may be saved, but the magnificent certainty that none can by any possibility be lost.

It is indeed difficult to understand how modern orthodoxy can speak of Christ as the Saviour of the world, and yet in the same breath assert that he does not save it, that he does not succeed in save one in ten thousand of its inhabitants, and has to yield all the rest to the devil! Would such a proportion be considered successful if we were speaking of any kind of human effort? Such a doctrine is in reality blasphemy, and every honest Christian should at once cast it out from his stock of religious ideas. We bring a grander gospel, and we preach a nobler creed than that.

Truly Christ is the Saviour of the world, for each man is saved by the Christ within himself – that Christ in us which is indeed the hope of glory, as the scriptures have said, for without that Divine spark within us how could it ever be possible for us to reunite ourselves with the Divine? Therefore we know that every man will one day realize his own divinity, and so will rise to “the treasure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”; we know that this evolution will succeed and not fail – that it will be a grand and glorious success, and that every soul in it shall eventually attain its goal.

The Difficulties of the Rich

Yet another instance in which only this explanation can make the biblical story rational is to be found in the nineteenth chapter of the gospel according to St. Mathew. It will be remembered that on a certain occasion a young man came to Christ and asked him how he might win eternal life – meaning of course, as I have said before, the liberation from the necessity of repeated birth and death. Christ meets him with the usual reply, which would have been given by any of the great teachers: “Keep the commandments.” But the young man proceeds to explain that he has already kept all these exoteric commandments all his life, and wishes to know what more he can do to expedite his progress. Christ in his answer to him employs one of the well-known technical terms of the Essene community in which he himself had been trained, for he says to him, “If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me.” To be “perfect” means to attain a certain level of initiation, to belong to a certain class within that kingdom of heaven; and the remark of the Christ simply repeats the universal teaching of the Eastern sages, that poverty and obedience are necessary for those who would enter among the ranks of the higher initiates.

The young man finds a difficulty here, not yet feeling prepared to give up his worldly possessions, and then the Christ proceeds to moralize upon the difficulty which stands in the way of the rich man when he attempts to enter upon the higher stages of this path. He even uses an exceedingly strong simile, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.” If this be taken as it is ordinarily explained by theology it is indeed a most ridiculous statement, for it seems to imply that no man who is rich can be good, or can ever attain to a place in heaven. The orthodox profess to understand it in this sense, and yet it seems that even they must see how ridiculous is

the supposition; for we do not observe that the vast majority of them make haste to get rid of riches and become poor in order to qualify for this entry into heaven. But when we understand that the Kingdom of Heaven means the brotherhood of the initiated, we instantly comprehend that the inevitable preoccupation and trouble connected with the due administration of great wealth is a serious obstacle in the way of the candidate for the shorter and steeper path, and we realize fully then the wisdom of the advice given by the great teacher, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me."

Another passage indicating the same knowledge of technical terms on the part of the Christ occurs in the seventh chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew where he utters that remarkable verse, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine." In the present day we would consider such epithets when applied to human beings as rude and improper; but it must be remembered once more that these were simply technical terms indicating those who stood outside or beneath a certain level. The ordinary theologian must find considerable difficulty in explaining to himself the use of such language by the Christ; but when we understand the real nature of these terms the words become at once explicable.

St. Paul the Initiate.

When we turn from the words of Jesus himself to those of St. Paul we shall find that his writings also are permeated with occult teaching, with references to the Mysteries which lie behind the outer teaching, and with the technical terms which are well known in connection with them. Any one who will take the trouble to read the second and third chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians will see clearly that this is so when once his attention has been drawn to the real interpretation of the words. Once more he refers to the degree of perfection, and to the instruction which can be given only to those who have attained that degree; he says: "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." And again, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world began, which none of the princes of this world know." This last statement itself should be enough to prove to any fair-minded student the existence of the inner teaching of the Church, since it would be obviously and flagrantly false if it were made of any of the ordinary Christian doctrine such as appears in the scriptures; for that was

undoubtedly within the reach of the princes of this world then just as now. Sometimes people have tried to refer these remarks as to mysteries to the holy communion, which was celebrated only in the presence of those who were members of the church. Yet it is evident that that could not be the meaning in this case, because further examination of this same epistle will show that the Corinthians to whom St. Paul was writing were already full members of the church and were in the habit of celebrating the Eucharist. Yet in spite of this he speaks to them as babes in Christ, and says that he can give them only the milk of the earlier teaching. Obviously, therefore, this mystery unknown to all was not the celebration of the holy communion. Indeed, much of the language which the apostle himself uses could scarcely be applied in this sense, for he speaks again and again of "The deep things of God, which the Holy Ghost teaches; the hidden wisdom, and the wisdom of God in a mystery." Many other technical terms he employs, as, for example, when he speaks of himself as a master-builder and a steward of the mysteries of God.

Another passage which shows this is to be found in the third chapter of his epistle to the Phillippians, in which he describes himself as "striving if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." What can this resurrection have been to which he, the great apostle, found it necessary to strive in order that he might attain? Clearly it could not be what is ordinarily understood by that term, for the rising again from the dead at the last day is to happen to all people, good and bad alike; there could be no necessity to make any effort in order to gain that. What he is striving to attain is undoubtedly that initiation to which we have already referred – the initiation which liberates a man from life and death alike, which raises him above the necessity of further incarnation upon earth. We shall notice that a few verses later on he urges "as many as be perfect" to strive as he is striving; he does not give this advice to the ordinary member of the church, because he knows that for him this is not yet possible.

Many other quotations bearing a similar interpretation might be given from the writings of St. Paul; but let us pass on now to those who are called the Fathers of the Church – the writers who immediately followed the apostolic period. We shall find that they know well what St. Paul meant when he spoke so frequently of the Mysteries, for they themselves often use exactly the same terms in referring to them. For example, one of the earliest and greatest of them, St. Clement of Alexandria, borrows

verbatim from a Neo-Pythagorean document a whole sentence to the effect that "It is not lawful to reveal to profane persons the Mysteries of the Word." This last term is the translation of the Greek "Logos," and in this sentence he inserts that word in the place of the Eleusinian goddesses who are mentioned in the original document.

The Three Stages of the Church

In these days the church considers it her highest glory that she has produced the saint, and she points to the roll of her saints as a proof of the truth and the result of her teaching. Yet in these early days this, which now seems the final goal of her effort, was only an introduction to it. Then she had three great order or degrees, through which her children had to pass; and these were called respectively Purification, Illumination, and Perfection. Now she devotes herself solely to producing good men, and she points to the saint as her crowning glory and achievement; but in those days when she had made a man a saint her work with him was only just beginning, for then only was he fitted for the training and the teaching which she could give him then, but cannot now, because she has forgotten her ancient knowledge. Her Purification led the man to saintship; her Illumination then gave him the knowledge which was taught in the Mysteries, and this led him up towards the condition of Perfection and of unity with the Divine. Now she contents herself with the preliminary Purification, and has no Illumination to give.

St. Clement of Alexandria

Read what St. Clement says on this subject, as quoted in *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria* by Dr. C. Bigg, p.62. "Purity is only a negative state, valuable chiefly as the condition of insight. He who has been purified in baptism and then initiated into the little Mysteries (has acquired, that is to say, the habits of self-control and reflection), becomes ripe for the greater Mysteries, for Epopteia or Gnosis, the scientific knowledge of God." This latter is a startling claim to make from the modern orthodox point of view; I imagine that few preachers at the present day would claim to have the scientific knowledge of God, or even to know in the least what such an expression meant. Yet there it stands in the writing of one of the earliest and greatest of the Church Fathers. We have only to examine the Theosophical teaching to see exactly what he meant, to understand (so far as the intellect of man can at present

understand) what is meant by the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of Christ, and his dwelling within the heart of man. The scientific knowledge of God is still within the reach of the earnest and reverent student; it is no mere form of words, but a glowing and definite fact.

How highly St. Clement valued this transcendent knowledge may be seen by another quotation from his writing given in *Christian Mysticism*, by W. R. Inge, page 86. "Knowledge," says Clement, "is more than faith, Faith is a summary knowledge of urgent truths, suitable for people who are in a hurry; but knowledge is scientific faith. If the Gnostic (the philosophical Christian) had to choose between the knowledge of God and eternal salvation, and it were possible to separate two things so inseparably connected, he would choose without the slightest hesitation the knowledge of God." That surely is a sufficiently clear statement. Evidently St. Clement thought that faith was only for those who had not time to go into the study of the definite science themselves; they had to be content with accepting its magnificent truths on faith, just as is the case with ourselves with regard to any of the physical-plane sciences of the present day. If each man had a life of leisure, no doubt he could take up chemistry or astronomy and study it at first-hand for himself; if he has no time to do this, he thankfully accepts the conclusions at which those arrive who have studied it. When we come to this great science of life which is called religion, such acceptance of the result of the investigation of others is spoken of as faith; but assuredly, as St. Clement says, direct knowledge is infinitely better.

The idea that man is capable of attaining this perfection, or deification as it is often called in the writings of the Fathers, would probably be considered sacrilegious by many of our modern theological writers, yet it was clearly held by the early Fathers, and they knew its attainment to be a possibility. Professor Harnack remarks that "deification was the idea of salvation taught in the Mysteries"; and again "after Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen, the idea of deification is found in all the Fathers of the ancient church, and that in a primary position. We have it in Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Apollinarius, Ephraem Syrus, Epiphanius, and others, as also in Cyril, Sophronius, and later Greek and Russian theologians."

What Origen Says

The most celebrated pupil of St. Clement was the far-famed Origen – perhaps the most brilliant and learned of all the Ecclesiastical Fathers. He also asserts the existence of the secret teaching of the Church, for in his celebrated controversy with Celsus he states definitely that the system of exoteric and esoteric teaching which was in general use among philosophers was also adopted in Christianity. He also speaks plainly with regard to the difference between the ignorant faith of the undeveloped multitude and the higher and reasonable faith which is founded upon definite knowledge. He draws a distinction between “the popular irrational faith” which leads to what he calls “somatic Christianity” (that is to say, the merely physical form of the religion) and the “spiritual Christianity” offered by the Gnosis or wisdom. He makes perfectly clear that by “somatic Christianity” he means that faith which is based on the gospel history. Of a teaching founded upon this historical narrative he says “what better method could be devised to assist the masses?” In Mr. Inge’s book mentioned above (p.89) he is quoted as teaching that “the Gnostic or sage no longer needs the crucified Christ. The eternal or spiritual gospel which is his possession shows clearly all things concerning the Son of God himself, both the Mysteries shown by his words and the things of which his acts were the symbols. It is not that Origen denies or doubts the truth of the gospel history, but he feels that events which happened only once can be of no importance, and regards the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as only one manifestation of a universal law, which was really enacted, not in this fleeting world of shadows, but in the eternal counsels of the Most High. He considers that those who are thoroughly convinced of the universal truths revealed by the incarnation and the atonement need trouble themselves no more about their particular manifestations in time.”

Here then we see distinct and repeated references to the hidden teaching, greater far than anything known to the Church of the present day, and carrying those who study it to a much higher level than is ever now attained by the disciples of orthodoxy. What has become of this magnificent heritage of Christianity? Why was this wonderful wisdom lost, and how can it be regained? Happily it has not been lost. The great Gnostic doctors, who taught it so poetically, were cast out of the church as heretics by the vote of the ignorant majority, who would not include within their scheme of religion anything which was beyond their comprehension, anything which took years of trouble and study to learn. Yet something of the Gnostic teaching has been preserved; the orthodox

endeavoured with pious fury to destroy all traces of it, yet here and there a book has been discovered – kept perhaps until these later days among those who are commonly called savages, and yet have proved less savage than the orthodox defenders of the faith.

In that way we are slowly coming to know something of those splendid teachings, and we find them, as the occult student would naturally expect, to be precisely the same truths which Theosophy is now placing once more before the Western world. Those who are interested in the study of this particular side of the doctrine of the wisdom-religion cannot approach it better than through the writings of Mr. G.R.S. Mead of London, the most Scholarly of our Theosophical authors. He has spent many years in a careful study of the strange medley of faiths and opinions which gather round the cradle of Christendom, and his writings show us clearly how this Christian religion arose quite naturally and logically out of the faiths of the period just proceeding its birth. He makes it abundantly evident that this is not a revelation from on high, no new statement of additional fact, but simply a perfectly natural result of what has gone before it. Any one wishing to understand what Christianity really is, what its teaching truly mean, and what is its part in the great life of the world, cannot do better than commence by a thoughtful study of Mr. Mead's works.

Theosophy Explains

Meantime it needs not even so much study as is involved in that enquiry to convince any open-minded person that Theosophy holds the solution to all the problems connected with the Christian doctrine. Take, for example, the great dogma of the Trinity, which as originally stated seems so incomprehensible and meaningless. Invoke the aid of a Theosophical diagram such as that which is given in the last edition of my own little book upon The Christian Creed, and at once the obscurity will be lit up as by sunlight, and it will be seen that the strange and apparently incomprehensible statements have an obvious meaning which is full of interest and vividly clear. Read, for example, the Athanasian Creed; by the light of the Theosophical diagrams its sentences, hitherto so little comprehended, will be seen to be luminous and crystal clear; so that the very formula which has been cast aside by multitudes as hopelessly unintelligible now stands forth as perhaps the strongest and grandest statement as to the nature and the power of God that has ever been put

into words. The so-called damnatory clauses, to which so much exception has been taken, fall into their places and are at once seen to be free from all objection, when once their real meaning has been understood.

There is no other way of rendering a great deal of this older teaching intelligible at all; unless we are prepared to accept the Theosophical explanation of them, we must resign all hope of finding any rational meaning at the back of these great symbols of one of the world faiths. But the Theosophical teaching introduces order into the chaos; it at once enables us to sift out these dogmas which are expressions of universal truth from the accretions with which the uncomprehending theology of the ignorant monks has surrounded them. The same thing is true with many of the other dogmas of the church; not only is the mighty doctrine of the Trinity made clear, but salvation, conversion, regeneration, sanctification – all these are explained, and from the Theosophical standpoint they are no longer mere names with a vague mist of uncertainty surrounding them, but definite and real facts, which are all parts of a coherent system. To understand these the student should read Mrs. Besant's great book *Esoteric Christianity*, which will throw a flood of light for him upon much that has been dark before. Best of all, it will show him that Christianity in no way contradicts the other great faiths of the world – that they are all alike efforts to state the same great truth, the truth that lies behind them all – this Divine Wisdom which in modern days we call Theosophy.

To the earnest Christian who has in some way or other been aroused into thinking about the doctrines of the Church, and has therefore naturally been led into doubting them in the form in which they are generally presented, we would strongly recommend the study of the teachings of Theosophy. Many a man who begins to doubt finds himself left without definite basis for any belief, and knows not where to turn for comfort and enlightenment. To such an one our advice would be: "Do not cast aside your religion, but rather try to learn what it really is. Then will be given back to you all that was bright and beautiful and true in the faith of your childhood, but it will be given back to you on a different basis. It will no longer be founded upon authority, whether it be of a book or of a Church; for such belief is always liable to be overthrown if you should find that the book or the Church is not as historically reliable as you had been led to suppose. You will receive back your faith, but founded this time upon the impregnable rock of reason and common-sense, so that the more fully

you examine it, the more you will become convinced of its truth and the more you will understand its glory.”

The Gospel of Theosophy

In saying this we are speaking not from theory but from experience. To us who have studied Theosophy it has brought all this and more. It has been to us a veritable gospel of good news from on high, which has shown us light where before was darkness, which has made life easier to bear and death easier to face; which has given us, not hope only, but the glorious certainty of future progress. It is for that reason that we put it before you, for that reason that we urge your examination of it. We have no wish to make converts in the ordinary sense of the word. We are not impelled, as is the poor ignorant missionary, by any theory that, unless we can induce our hearers or readers to believe as we do, there will be for them no way of salvation from the horrors of eternal suffering. We know that every one will attain the final goal of humanity, whether he now believes what we tell him or whether he does not. We know that the progress of every man is certain; but he may make his road easy or he may make it difficult. If he goes on in ignorance he is likely to find it hard and painful; if he learns the truth about life and death, about God and man, and the relation between them, he will understand how to travel so as to make the path easy for himself and also (which is much more important) to be able to lend a helping hand to his fellow-travellers who know less than he. This is what you all may do, and what we hope you will do. We who are Theosophists ask no blind faith from you; we simply put this philosophy before you, and ask you to study it, and we believe that if you do so you will find what we have found – rest and peace and help, and the power to be of use in the world. Above all things we would say to you, not only study the Theosophical truth, but try to live the life which Theosophy recommends to you. Now as in the days of old it still remains true that those who do the will of the Father who is in Heaven, they shall know of the doctrine whether it be true; and so to those who doubt our teaching we would say take it up provisionally, take it as a hypothesis, but live the life which it directs, and then you will see for yourselves whether you are the better or the worse for it. Try to realize the unity of the brotherhood which it teaches, and to show the unselfishness which it exacts; and then see for yourself whether this is an improvement upon other modes of living or not. Try the unselfishness and the watchful helpfulness, and see

whether here is not an opening into new fields of happiness and usefulness.

We who are studying this know that as yet we are only at the beginning of it; yet we say to you with the utmost confidence: "Come and join us in our study, and to you also will come the peace and the confidence that has come to us, so that through your knowledge of Theosophy your lives will become purer and brighter, and above all things more useful and helpful to your fellowman."



CHAPTER 3. THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

Every nation, every race, every religion has always had its mysteries. But the sense in which we use that word today hardly conveys a fair idea of what it meant in the older time, to which we wish to turn our thoughts this evening. Its true signification is simply that which is hidden; but when we hear of it in connection with religious matters it seems to suggest to us a good deal more than that. We have been brought up along a certain line of religious belief, one of the professions of which is that all of its doctrines lie open to the comprehension of the dullest mind. If this claim were really true, it would be a confession of failure on the part of that religion, for it would mean that it had no teaching to give to the thinking man; but it is not in the least true of primitive Christianity, as I showed in my lecture upon that subject. That had its inner teaching, as is true of every great doctrine, so that it may be useful to all classes of humanity, and not only to one. But the mistaken idea which has been so sedulously impressed upon us leads us to feel a certain distrust for the wiser faiths which meet all needs, and to think of them as unnecessarily hiding part of the truth, or grudging it to the world. In the old days there was no such thought as this; it was recognized that only those who came up to a certain standard of life were fit to receive the higher instruction, and those who wished for it set to work to qualify themselves for it. Now there is a tendency to demand all knowledge without making any effort toward this necessary preparation, and to grumble that it is churlishly held back, because the Great Ones in their wisdom foresee the dangers of placing certain truths before the minds of those who are not ready to grasp them. Knowledge is power, and people must prove their fitness before they will be entrusted with power, for the object of the whole scheme is human evolution, and the interests of evolution would not be served by promiscuous publication of occult truth.

It is generally recognized that it would be foolish to put dynamite into the hands of a child at play, and we have ample evidence around us that such fragments of occult truth as have been allowed to become public have been terribly misused. The fact of the power of thought and will and the possibility of mesmeric influence is now finding wider acceptance, and the immediate result is that we see shoals of advertisements offering, always of course for a consideration, to teach us how to succeed in business by exercising undue pressure of this sort upon our fellowmen, in order that we may gain at their expense. The undeveloped man always

misunderstands and misuse the least fragment of higher knowledge. To one who comprehends, there is the greatest solace and the most powerful incentive to right living in the profound truth of our unity with the Divine; yet that very truth has been offered as an excuse for the grossest sensuality by the unevolved among the Vedantins. The history of the great empire of Atlantis is the most impressive of warnings as to the awful consequences of the misapplication of occult knowledge.

The Mysteries of Eleusis

So the existence of the secret teaching is more than justified, and its presence in all the world-religions is explained. But though it may be traced in all, when we speak of the Mysteries our thoughts turn to one or two only – chiefly to the Mysteries of Bacchus and Eleusis in connection with the religion of ancient Greece, and in a lesser degree to those of still more ancient Egypt and Chaldaea. The literature of the subject is scanty, and but little information is to be derived from it. Thomas Taylor's account is perhaps the best, though even in it there is much inaccuracy. Still, there is also a great deal of intuition displayed in his book – so much that it is difficult not to suppose that he may himself have been directly associated with the schools of the Mysteries in some past incarnation. Iamblichus, himself an initiate, has written upon the subject, but he gives even less information than Taylor – probably because he was more closely bound by promises of secrecy. A French author of the name of Foucart has also recently written on the subject. A chapter in Mr. Mead's book *Orpheus* epitomizes all that is known to scholars – a chapter which should be read by every one is interested in this side of the ancient life. Such information as I have to put before you is obtained in a different manner – not by studying the literary fragments which remain unto us, but rather by investigation and by memory. I have before had occasion to mention that certain members of our Society have been engaged in patient examination into the record of past incarnations, in order to study the laws under which rebirth takes place, and the way in which the actions of one life produce their inevitable results in the next. In the course of this research it was found that several of these members had been concerned in these Mysteries, and had been regularly initiated into their studies. Of course such initiations must in no way be confounded with those which separate the Steps of the Path of Holiness, for these latter lie at a much higher level, and all the mysteries were only a preparation for them. Nevertheless, there were definite degrees in the Mysteries, and the man

who entered pledged himself to remain silent as to what he saw. Now such a promise remains binding, even though it may have been made two thousand years ago; but those to whom it was given may release the disciple from his vow, and with regard to certain parts of the teaching this has been done. The reason is that the world has now evolved somewhat, and so a further experiment is being made; and much that used to be taught only under pledges of initiation is now published to the world in the Theosophical literature. Much of this information used to be regarded as secret and sacred; and today, though it is no longer secret, it is as sacred as ever. So that though I may not tell you all that the ancient Mysteries of Eleusis offered to the student, I may yet give you an outline of a great deal of it.

The first point which I wish to emphasize is that the charge of indecency so frequently brought against these Mysteries by their enemies had no foundation in fact – at least so far as the flourishing period of the race is concerned. It should never be forgotten that much of our so-called information about the Mysteries comes to us through the unscrupulous and bitterly hostile early Christian writers; and though these writers indignantly deny the suggestion that in their Church they have no mysteries worthy of the name, and claim that theirs are in every way as good and deep and far-reaching as those of their “pagan” opponents, they nevertheless bring the wildest and most abominable accusations against the mortality of those who participate in other rites than theirs.

The Methods of the Monk

Perhaps we hardly realize how entirely we have only one side of all those early controversies, and how absolutely we are in the hands of bitter, unscrupulous sectarians. We had in Europe a dark period, lasting for many centuries, when the savagery of Christianity had stamped out all knowledge, all learning, and almost all art; a period during which no one could even read or write except the priest and monks, so that whatever we have of records of early times, whatever we have of classical literature, comes to us of necessity through their hands, since they alone were able to make the manuscript copies. In these days of universal printing, and of the wide effusion of knowledge, we have little idea of what that meant – of what a power it placed in the hands of these mediaeval monks. A few older manuscripts may be here and there

discovered, but the vast majority of all that literature of the ancient times passed through the censorship of the Church at its most bigoted stage.

Another thing that we must realize is that these monks had no conception of what we now mean by literary morality. They were all quite ready to quote to any extent without acknowledgement; they did not see any reason why they should not use good material wherever they found it, and they mentioned whence it was obtained only if they thought that the name of the writer would add to the force of the argument. Often also when they had what they thought a good thing to say, they fathered it on some well-known name in order to secure for it greater attention. In quoting controversially from opponents, they made no attempt to treat the enemy fairly, or to state his case impartially; we know from their own confessions that they cited only what suited their argument of the moment, utilized that of which they thought something edifying could be made, and utterly ignored the rest. Thus we have only most partial accounts of the real opinions of their opponents, and we get about as fair an idea of what they really held or taught, as we should have of Roman Catholic theology if we took the word of the most rabid Protestant as our only guide to its comprehension.

With regard to this matter of the Mysteries we know that there was specially bitter controversy, and the Christian writers never hesitated to take up any weapon which they thought would gain them a point. If there was a popular slander, they eagerly seized upon it and magnified it – perhaps even in their prejudice they really believed it; and in that way they accept and repeat those unfounded charges of indecency against the celebration of the Mysteries. Sometimes in their replies we incidentally gather what popular opinion said of them, and then we begin to see about how much reliance is to be placed on such stories. Rumour held the Christian Church as guilty of the most abominable outrages – the commonest accusation being that at their secret meetings they offered human sacrifices and indulged in cannibalism. The statement that they murdered and devoured children recurs again and again; and it is not difficult to see how it may have arisen. They celebrated their Eucharist with closed doors, and spoke of it as meeting together to partake of the body and blood of the Son of Man; and one can easily see how that statement might be misconstrued by the ignorant, and how unworthy of the attention of the historian are the mere rumours on either side in a theological quarrel!

There is no doubt that in the long period during which the Mysteries flourished the most strenuous discipline was exacted from all candidates, and the utmost purity preserved; but it is probable that in the days of the decadence both of Greece and Rome even the Mysteries shared to some extent in the general degradation, just as, it will be remembered, did the Christian agapae also, which degenerated into the wildest and most reprehensible orgies. The Bacchic Mysteries came to be mere festivities towards the last, when Bacchus or Dionysos was regarded as the god of wine, instead of being recognized as the manifestation of the Logos, from whom came forth all life and strength. The life and strength were indeed sometimes symbolized as wine, or rather as the juice of the grape, and in this way the popular misconception arose. But this was only towards the end of the Empire, when all the true Mysteries had already been withdrawn into the background, and little but the outer shell remained. We must not judge them from their relics at that period, any more than we should judge the great Roman nation by its condition when it had fallen hopelessly into decay. Let us rather see what they were at the zenith of their glory and usefulness.

What the Mysteries Were

As is generally known, there were two divisions, the Greater and the Lesser Mysteries. What is not generally known is that there was always, behind and above these, the true Mystery of the Path, towards which these others led. Occult teaching has always been open for those who were ready to enter; the qualifications exacted have never varied, for they are not arbitrarily imposed, but are essentially necessary to advancement. At the present time the Path and some of its stages, and the qualifications required, are openly described in books and lectures, just as they were long ago in Indian literature; but in Greece and Rome no definite information seems to have been given on these points, and the very existence of the possibility of that advancement was not certainly known even to the initiates of the Greater Mysteries until they were actually fit to receive the mystic summons from within.

But to the Mysteries of which we are speaking large numbers were admitted; indeed, one classical author mentions a gathering of thirty thousand initiates, which, when we consider how small relatively was the population of Greece, shows us that the organization of the Mysteries was by no means so exclusive as we usually suppose. Indeed, our

investigations indicate that all seriously disposed and thinking people naturally gravitated towards them as the centre of religious knowledge. Men sometimes wonder how it was possible for great nations like Rome or Greece to remain satisfied with what we commonly call their religion – a chaos of unseemly myths, many of them not even decent, describing so-called gods and goddesses who were distinctly human in their actions and passions, and constantly quarrelling amongst themselves. The truth is that nobody was satisfied with it, and that it never was at all what we mean by a religion, though it was no doubt taken literally by many ignorant people. But all the cultured and thinking men took up the study of one or other of the systems of philosophy, and in many cases they were also initiates of the School of the Mysteries; and it was this higher teaching that really moulded their lives, and took for them the place of what we call religion – unless, indeed, they were frankly agnostic, as are so many cultured men now.

Moreover, it was through the teaching of the Mysteries that men learnt for the first time what the strange myths of the exoteric religion really meant – for originally they had a meaning, and for the Theosophical student it often lies near the surface. In my books on *The Other Side of Death* I have explained the signification given in the Mysteries to the stories of Tantalus and Sisylthus; the myth of Tityus also is obviously symbolical of the result of certain passions in the astral world; while the legend of Persephone or Proserpine is clearly an occult parable of the descent of the soul into matter. Remember how the story tells us that Proserpine was carried away while she was plucking the flower of the narcissus, and at once you have a suggestion of a connection with that other myth. Narcissus is represented to have been a young man of extraordinary beauty who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water, and was so attracted by it that he fell in and was drowned, and was afterwards changed by the gods into a beautiful flower. One sees instantly that such a story as this can have no meaning but a symbolical one, and by the light of the philosophical doctrine of the aeons it is one not difficult to interpret. All the cognate systems of thought teach that the soul was not originally immersed in matter, and need not have been so, but for the fact that she was attracted by the image of herself in the lower conditions of matter, so often symbolized by water. Beguiled by this reflection, she identifies herself with the lower personality, and is for the time sunk altogether in matter; yet nevertheless the divine seed remains, and presently she springs up again as a flower. Now realize that it was while

Proserpine was stooping to Narcissus that she was seized and carried off by Desire, who is the king of this lower world; and that although she was rescued from complete captivity by the efforts of her mother, yet after that she had to spend her life half in the lower world and half in that above – that is to say, partly in incarnation and partly out of it.

The Lesser Mysteries

This is an example of the way in which these odd and apparently pointless fables were taken up in the Mystery instructions and made luminous and beautiful. The explanations in connection with the astral life were given chiefly in the Lesser Mysteries, which were especially concerned with this side of the subject. The centre of their worship and work was at Agrae, and those who were initiated into them were called Mystae, and wore as their mystical dress a dappled fawn-skin, symbolizing the astral body. The appropriateness of this emblem will be immediately recognized by any clairvoyant, or by a Theosophical student who has examined the plates of my book *Man, Visible and Invisible*, for he will remember the bands and mottlings which indicate the various passions and emotions, and the rapid flashing changes which are so conspicuous in it. The same idea is expressed by the leopard-skin worn by the Egyptian initiated priest while offering his sacrifice, and the tiger or antelope-skin so often used by Eastern Yogis.

Broadly speaking, the Lesser Mysteries were principally concerned with the astral world, and the Greater Mysteries with the heaven-world. They taught much more than this, of course, but the first and most prominent fact of their instruction was that certain results flowed inevitably from certain actions, and so that the life which a man lived on the physical plane was chiefly important as a preparation for that which it brought in its train. The Lesser Mysteries taught vividly the astral part of these results, illustrating it by showing the most striking object lessons from real life. In the earlier days when the hierophant directing the studies described the effect of some particular vice or crime, he used his occult power to materialize some good example of the fate which his words portrayed – in some cases, it is stated, enabling the sufferer to speak and explain the condition in which he found himself as the outcome of a neglect while on earth of the eternal laws under which the worlds are governed. Sometimes, instead of this, a vivid image of the state of some

victim of his own folly would be materialized for the instruction of the neophytes.

In the days of the decadence there remained no hierophant who possessed the power to produce these occult illustrations, and consequently their place was taken by actors dressed to represent the sufferers, or in some cases by ghostly images projected by means of concave mirrors – or even by cleverly executed statuary or mechanical figures. Of course it was perfectly understood by all concerned that these were only representations, and no one was ever deceived into supposing that they were original cases. Some of our ecclesiastical writers, however, failed to realize this, and some of them have spent much time and ingenuity in “exposing” deceptions which never have deceived any one, least of all those who were especially concerned with them. A gentleman named Hippolytus, who seems to have been the Maskelyne and Cook of this period, is especially zealous along these lines, and his accounts of apparatus whereby lights might be mysteriously produced, and his suggestions as to the use of invisible ink, are really quite amusing reading.

We may take it, then, that the principal work of the teachers of the Lesser Mysteries was to inform their pupils thoroughly of the exact result in astral life of physical thought and action. Besides this, however, much instruction was given in cosmogony, and the evolution of man on this earth was fully explained, again with the aid of illustrative scenes and figures, produced at first by materialization, but later imitated in various ways. The directors seem always to have recognized two classes among their pupils, and to have chosen out from them those whom they thought capable of special training in the development of psychic faculties. These received special instruction as to how the astral body can be used as a vehicle, and had definite exercises set for their practice, to develop them in clairvoyance or prevision.

The initiates had a number of proverbs or aphorisms peculiar to themselves, some of which were very characteristic and Theosophical in tone. “Death is life, and life is death,” is a saying which will need to interpretation for the student of Theosophy, who comprehends, at least to some extent, how infinitely more real and vivid is life on any other plane than this imprisonment in the flesh. Whosoever pursues realities during life will pursue them after death; whosoever pursues unrealities during this life will pursue them also after death,” is also a statement

entirely in line with the facts as to post-mortem conditions with which Theosophy so fully acquaints us, and it emphasizes the great truth upon which we so often find it necessary to insist, that death in no way changes the real man, but that his disposition and his mode of thought remain exactly what they were before.

The Greater Mysteries

Turning to the Greater Mysteries, we find that the centre of their celebration was at Eleusis, near Athens. Their initiates were named Epoptai, and their ceremonial garment was no longer a fawn-skin, but a golden fleece – whence, naturally, the whole myth of Jason and his companions. This symbolized the mental body, and the power definitely to function in it. Those who have seen the splendid radiance of all which pertains to that mental plane, who have noticed the innumerable vortices produced by the ceaseless emission and impact of thought-forms, who remember that brilliant yellow is especially the colour which manifests intellectual activity, will acknowledge that this was no inapt representation. In this class, as in the lower one, there were two types – those who could be taught to use the mental body, and to form round it the strong temporary vehicle of astral matter which has sometimes been called the mayavirupa, and the far greater majority who were not yet prepared for this development, but could nevertheless be instructed with regard to the mental plane and the powers and faculties appropriate to it. As in the Lesser Mysteries men learnt the exact result after death of certain actions and modes of life on the physical plane, so in the Greater Mysteries they learnt how causes generated in this lower existence worked out in the heaven-world. In the Lesser the necessity and the method of the control of the desires, passions and emotions was made clear; in the Greater the same teaching was given with regard to the control of mind.

The other side of the Theosophical teaching, that of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis, was also continued here, and carried to a much greater length. Instead of being instructed only as to the broad outlines of evolution by reincarnation, and the previous races through which man has risen in this world, the initiates now received a description of the whole scheme as we have it now, including the seven great chains and their relation to the solar system as a whole. Their terms were different from ours, but the instruction was in essence the same; where we speak

of successive life-waves and outpourings, they spoke of aeons and emanations, but there is no doubt that they were fully in touch with the facts, and that they represented them to their pupils in wonderful visions of cosmic processes and their terrestrial analogies. Just as in the case of the after-death states, their representations were at first produced by occult methods; and later, when these failed them, by mechanical and pictorial means, the results of which were greatly inferior. Illustrations of germ development shown by picture or model, in the same way as we might show some of them by means of a microscope, were employed to teach by the law of correspondences the truth of cosmic evolution. It may possibly be that a misunderstanding of the theatrical representation of some of these processes of reproduction was distorted into an idea of indecency, and so the seed was sown from which sprang later the false and foolish accusations of the ignorant and bigoted Christians.

Some have wondered why so much trouble should be taken to explain complicated processes of past evolution, which after all have no obvious bearing on practical life. One can only say in reply that it is important for man to know something of how he came to be what he is, so that he may the better comprehend the future that lies before him, and see from the method of his progress in the past how best to further it in the lives to come. We may estimate the importance which such teaching bears in the minds of the Great Ones from whom all religions come, from the fact that in every faith in the world, even among those of savages, we always find some traces of an effort to explain the origin of the world and of man, even though often it may be only the wildest and least comprehensible of myths. We have a prominent example of this in the earlier part of the book of Genesis, which gives the account of these transactions which is traditional among the Jews. In the latest communication from the Great Brotherhood which stands behind and directs the affairs of the world, we find once more how prominent a position is assigned to the origin of man and of the system, from the space which is devoted to them in Madame Blavatsky's monumental work *The Secret Doctrine*.

The Symbols Employed

Among the many interesting facts connected with the Mysteries was the use in their ceremonies of certain implements or symbolical treasures, the meaning of which perhaps needs some explanation. One of these was the Thyrsus, a rod with a pine-cone at the top; and frequently this rod was

said to be hollow, and filled with fire. The same symbolic implement is found in India, where it is usually a seven-jointed bamboo which is employed. When a candidate has been initiated he was often described as one who had been touched with Thyrsus, indicating that this was not a mere emblem, but had also a practical use. It indicated the spinal cord ending in the brain, and the fire enclosed within it was the sacred serpent-fire which in Sanskrit is called kundalini. It was magnetized by the instructor and laid against the back of the candidate in order to awaken the latent force within him. It may probably also have been employed in the production of trance conditions, and it is possible that the fire within it may often have not only animal magnetism, but electricity. The latent force of kundalini is closely connected with occult development and with many kinds of practical magic, but any attempt to awaken or use it without the supervision of a competent teacher is fraught with serious dangers.

Another interesting group of symbols were the playthings of the infant Bacchus, or Dionysos. As I have already said, Dionysos was one of the names applied to the Logos, and the infancy signifies the commencement of this manifestation. In this infancy he is represented as playing, and his toys are a spinning-top, a ball, a mirror and a set of dice. You may think these incomprehensible symbols, but if you could see them you would understand at once, for these playthings are the matter of which the worlds are built. The spinning-top is the atom, always whirling round and round; and atoms are the bricks out of which the edifice of the solar system is constructed. The dice are not of the ordinary type, but are all different, for they are the five Platonic solids – the only regular solids which exist – the tetrahedron, the cube, the octahedron, the dodecahedron and the eikosihedron. These again may be regarded as building material, though in rather a different way. They represent the atoms of the various planes of nature – not that these are the shapes of those atoms, but that they indicate to the student of practical occultism certain fundamental qualities of the atoms, and the direction in which their force can be poured forth. We may make them into a series of seven by adding the point at the lower end and the sphere at the higher, and they then give us a sequence of deep hidden meaning. The ball with which he toys is naturally the earth, and his mirror is the astral matter, which so readily reflects and reverses everything, and is, therefore often symbolized as water, as in the story of Narcissus. It is interesting to note how all these curious and apparently unmeaning points clear up and

become luminous as we study and understand them. It is also noteworthy for the Theosophical student that the indication of the earth by a ball shows the acquaintance of the teachers with its sphericity, and that the atom as drawn by Mrs. Besant in *The Ancient Wisdom* is by no means inaptly represented by a spinning-top.

The Pythagorean School

Many of the ancient schools of Philosophy worked in connection with the Mystery teaching. The Pythagorean seems to have been especially close to the Theosophical ideas of the present day. It divided its students into three degrees, which corresponded almost exactly with those of the early Christians, who called them the stages of Purification, Illumination and Perfection respectively – the last one including what St. Clement calls the scientific knowledge of God. In the Pythagorean scheme the first order was that of the Akoustikoi, or Hearers, who took no part in the discussions or addresses, but kept absolute silence in the meetings for two years, and devoted themselves to listening and learning.

At the end of that time, if otherwise satisfactory, the students were eligible for the second order of the Mathmatikoi. The mathematics which they learnt were not, however, confined to what we now mean by that term. We now study this science as an end in itself, but for them it was only a preparation for something much wider, higher and more practical. Geometry as we now know it was taught outside in ordinary life as a preparation; but inside these great Schools the subject was carried much farther, to the study and comprehension of the fourth dimension, and the laws and properties of higher space. It can only be fully understood if we take it thus as a whole, not in mere fragments, and as an introduction to astral development. It leads a man to understand all the octaves of vibrations, the vast areas of which as yet science knows nothing, the intricate occult relations of numbers, colours and sounds, the various three-dimensional sections of the mighty cone of space, and the true shape of the universe. There is a vast amount to be gained from the study of mathematics by those who know how to take it up in the right way. It helps us to see how the worlds are made, for, as was said of old, “God geometrizes.”

The third degree of the Pythagoreans was that of the Physikoi – not physicists in our modern sense of the word, but students of the true inner

life, who learnt how to distinguish the Divine Life under all its disguises, and so were able to comprehend the course of its evolution. The life exacted from all these pupils was one of the most exalted purity. In some of the schools it was divided into five stages, which correspond fairly with the five steps of the probationary Path, as described in our own literature.

The Greek Mysteries appear under different names in different places, but what has been said above will apply to all of them. There were the Mysteries of Zeus in Crete, of Hera in Argolis, of Athena in Athens, of Artemis in Arcadia, of Hecate in Aegina, and of Rhea in Phrygia. There was the so-called worship of the Kabeiroi in Egypt, Phoenicia and Greece; there were the interesting Persian Mysteries of Mithra, and those of Isis and Osiris in Egypt.

The Egyptian Mysteries

These last were surrounded by much that is of special interest to us. The well-known Book of the Dead is part of one of their manuals. The chapters which have been gradually collected from various tombs do not give us the whole of that work, but only one section of it, and even that is much corrupted. In its entirety it was intended as a kind of guide to the astral plane, containing a number of instructions for the conduct of the departed in the lower regions of that new world. The mind of the Egyptian seems to have worked along exceedingly formal and orderly lines; he tabulated every conceivable description of entity which a dead man could by any possibility meet, and arranged carefully the special charm or "word of power" which he considered most certain to vanquish the creature if he should prove hostile.

The Egyptian initiations were calculated on the same general plan. The candidate was attired in a white robe, emblematic of the purity which was expected (further symbolized by the preliminary bath, from which was derived the idea of Christian baptism), and brought before a conclave of priest-initiates in a sort of vault or cavern. He was formally tested as to the development of the clairvoyant faculty which he had been previously instructed how to awaken, and for this purpose had to read an inscription upon a brazen shield, of which the blank side was presented to his physical vision. Later he was left alone to keep a kind of vigil. Certain mantrams, or words of power, had been taught to him, which were supposed to be appropriate to control certain classes of entities; so during

his vigil various appearances were projected before him, some of a terrifying and some of a seductive nature, so that it might be seen whether his courage and coolness remained perfect. He drove away all these appearances in turn, each by his own special sign or word; but at the end, all these combined bore down upon him at once, and in this final effort he was instructed to use the mightiest word of power (what is called in the East a Raja-Mantram), by which all possible evil could be vanquished. Whether the majority of the Egyptian students knew, as we know, that all these various charms and words were given only to aid and strengthen the will of the man, is not clear; though undoubtedly the higher initiates must have understood this. In truth, courage and purity of intention are all that is necessary, when coupled with the knowledge that had already been given.

Other ceremonies of the Egyptian Mysteries are of interest to us in the Occidental nations, because some of their ritual has curiously been entangled with our religious teachings, and utterly misunderstood and materialized. Even though at these later dates the ritual was shorn of much of its ancient splendour, it was still impressive. At one stage the candidate laid himself upon a curiously hollowed wooden cross, and after certain ceremonies was entranced. His body was then carried down into the vaults underneath the temple or pyramid, while he himself “descended into hades,” or the underworld – that is to say, in our modern nomenclature, he passed on to the astral plane. Here he had many experiences, part of his work being to “preach to the spirits in prison”; for he remained in that trance condition for three days and three nights, which typified the three rounds and the intervals between them, during which man was going through the earlier part of his evolution, and descending into matter. Then, after “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,” on the morning of the fourth day “he rose again from the dead” – that is to say, his body was brought back from the vault, and so placed that the rays of the rising sun fell upon his face and he awoke. This symbolizes the awakening of man in the fourth round, and the commencement of his ascent out of matter on the upward arc of evolution.

Then was given to the candidate a glimpse of the buddhic plane, a touch of that higher consciousness which enabled him to feel the underlying unity of all, and so realize, the divinity in all; and thus “he ascended into heaven.” Many other points out of the life of an initiate and the stages

through which he passes have been woven into the Christ-story by its authors, but they have been horribly misunderstood and degraded by the ignorant. An endeavour has been made to limit them and materialize them as historical events in the life of one man; though the philosophical student realizes that, as Origen has so well put it, "Events which happened only once can be of no importance, and life, death, and resurrection are only a manifestation of a universal law which is really enacted, not in this fleeting world of shadows, but in the eternal counsels of the most High."

In time there came degradation of the Mysteries, and the inner light and life were largely withdrawn from them, yet they did not entirely die. In spite of the Church, all through the darkest times when anyone who was suspected of unorthodoxy was relentlessly persecuted, when it would seem that knowledge was dead, and that anything like intellectual progress was impossible, there were nevertheless certain half-secret societies which carried on something of the tradition and the work. There were the Knights Templar, the Rosicrucians of the Middle Ages, the Knights of Light, the Brothers of Asia, and many another occult body. It is true that in many of these there seems to have been but little knowledge, and even that heavily veiled; yet then, as ever, it remained true that there were always in the background those who knew, so that those who earnestly sought the Truth have always been able to find it.

At the present time their quest is surely easier than it has ever been before. The conditions of the world now are different from any that have previously existed; the invention of printing has made it possible to spread knowledge abroad in a new way, and those who stand behind and direct the destinies of the world have thought it well that a small corner of the veil should be lifted, and that something at least of what has so long been jealously guarded should be put freely and openly before the eyes of men. The world at large has evolved, and so it is hoped that we may be safely trusted with something of additional knowledge; and thus it has come to pass, as Christ said of old, that "many prophets and kings desired to see the things that we see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things which we hear, and have not heard them." All this we in the Theosophical Society are enjoying freely; yet because it is now so freely given we must not ungratefully despise it. All the more should we value and prize this possession which is ours, all the greater is our responsibility for its right use, all the more strenuous should be our effort

to make it a part of our very lives, and to aid, in its light, in the evolution of the world. The opportunities now put before us are greater than those of our ancestors; let us see to it that we prove worthy of them. Let us not, as did the men of Atlantis, take advantage of them for selfish and personal gain, but let us take care that as we obtain greater knowledge and greater power it is always directed by greater love, so that we may learn to use it for the development of humanity and for the good of our fellowman.

Note. On the relation that exists between the Platonic solids of the Mysteries and the periodic law of the elements in modern chemistry, see Occult Chemistry by Annie Besant, 1909.



CHAPTER 4. BUDDHISM

It is obviously impossible to put before an audience in a lecture of an hour an adequate presentation of one of the great world-religions which is probably entirely new to many of those who are present. I do not propose therefore to give you the mere formal detail or framework of the subject, which those who wish for it can obtain from any encyclopaedia. My wish is rather to endeavor to put before you something of the life of the religion – less to quote from its books than to tell you how it acts and works as a living force today upon those who hold it as their creed. In connection with the Theosophical Society I have worked for years among the Buddhists of Ceylon and of Burma, and I was myself admitted into the Southern Buddhist Church by its Chief Abbott Hikkaduwe Sumangala. Though I must quote occasionally I will do so as little as possible, but shall try rather to give you my own impression of this great religion.

I must say a few words first as to the life of the Founder of Buddhism; then secondly I will outline its broad principles; and thirdly I will say something of its practical working.

The Life of the Founder

The story of the life of the Founder is one of the most beautiful that has ever been told, but I can give you only a slight sketch of it now. Those who wish to read it, told as it should be told, in glowing melodious poetry, should read *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold. Indeed, grandly poetical though it be, there is no statement so beautiful of the principles of this great religion as that which Sir Edwin Arnold has given in his matchless verse, and if it be my privilege to introduce to that book any one who does not know it, assuredly that reader will owe me a debt of gratitude.

Briefly, then, this mighty Founder was the Prince Siddartha Gautama of Kapilavastu, a city about a hundred miles north-east of Benares in India, within forty miles of the lower spurs of the Himalaya mountains. He was the son of Suddhodana, king of the Sakyas, and his wife, Queen Maya. He was born in the year 623 B.C. And his birth is surrounded with many beautiful legends, just as are the births of all the other great teachers. It is related that various portents took place – for example, that a wonderful star appeared, just as was afterward told with regard to the birth of

Christ. His father, the king, as was natural for an Indian monarch, had the child's horoscope cast immediately after his birth; and a remarkable and transcendent destiny was predicted for him. It was foretold that he had before him a great choice, and that he might excel all men of his time along one of two lines, according to his preference. Either he might become a king of much wider

temporal power than his father – an Overlord or Emperor of the whole Indian Peninsula such as has arisen only occasionally in history; or he might abandon all the privileges of his princely birth and become a homeless ascetic, vowed to perpetual poverty and chastity. But if he selected this latter destiny he would be the greatest religious teacher whom the world had ever seen, and the millions who would follow him in this capacity would be more numerous by far than the subjects of any earthly kingdom.

Perhaps we can hardly wonder that King Suddhodana shrank somewhat from the idea of this mendicant life for his firstborn son, and wished rather that his royal line should be perpetuated and elevated. So he endeavoured from the first to direct the Prince's choice rather along temporal than spiritual lines; and since he knew that the acceptance of the spiritual life would be most likely to be determined by the sight of the woes and sorrows of the world, and the desire to remedy them, he decided (so the story tells us) to keep from the Prince's sight anything which could suggest these doleful topics. It is said that he resolved that the Prince should know nothing of decay or of death, and should be brought up in the midst of temporal pleasures and taught to devote himself to the glory and power of the royal house. The Prince dwelt in a noble palace encircled by miles of beautiful gardens, in which he was practically a prisoner, although he knew it not. He was surrounded by all that could minister to his delights in every possible way; only the young and the beautiful were allowed to approach him, and any one who was sick or suffering was sedulously kept out of his sight.

So he seems to have passed his early years in this strange, confined and yet delightful world. The boy grew up until he became of marriageable age, when he was betrothed to Yasodhara, daughter of the King Suprabuddha. It seems to have been supposed that this new interest would entirely fill the Prince's life; and yet it is recorded that all the while at intervals remembrances of other lives would rise within his mind, and

some faint presage of a mighty duty unfulfilled would trouble his repose. This uneasiness steadily increased and eventually he seems to have insisted upon passing into the outer world and seeing something of life other than his own.

It is recorded how in this way for the first time he came in contact with old age, with sickness and with death; and, profoundly affected by the sight of these states, so common to us, yet wholly new and unfamiliar to him, he sorrowed greatly over the sad destiny of his fellowmen. Seeing also one day a holy hermit, he was deeply impressed with the serenity and majesty of his appearance, and realized that here at least was one who rose superior to the otherwise universal ills of life. From that period his resolve to live the spiritual life grew stronger and stronger, and though in due course he married Yasodhara, and had one son, Rahula, at last the time came when in his twenty-ninth year he definitely abandoned his princely rank, leaving all his wealth in the hands of his wife and son, and betook himself to the jungle as an ascetic.

This may seem to our modern notions a very strange course to adopt, but it must be remembered that it was the only way to obtain such instruction as he desired. The conditions of life then were so different from our own that it is difficult for us to realize them. There were no printed books, and all the holy men were mendicants and ascetics. A student then had no alternative but to go from teacher to teacher to learn what each had to tell, and to discuss with each the problems of life so as to see what light he could throw on them.

Naturally at this time the Prince, like his father and all other inhabitants of India, belonged to the great Hindu religion; and consequently it was to some of the leading ascetic Brahmans that he went for instruction and guidance in this new life. For six years he passed from one of these teachers to another seeking to learn from them the true solution to the problem of life, and a remedy for the misery of the world, yet never finding fully that which he sought. Their doctrine seems always to have been that only through the most rigid asceticism and the heaviest self-imposed penances could one hope to escape from the sorrow and suffering which were the heritage of all men; and he tried all their systems to the uttermost one after the other, yet ever with an unsatisfied yearning for something greater, truer, and more real beyond. At last such persistent and rigorous asceticism told upon his health, and it is related

that one day he fainted from hunger and lay almost at the point of death. He recovered from this, but he realized that though this might certainly be a way out of the world, it was hardly the way in which life could be brought into the world; and he reasoned that to aid his fellow-men he must at least live long enough to find the truth which should set them free. He seems to have taken from the first the most altruistic attitude. For himself he had all that could make life happiest; yet the dumb sorrow of the teeming millions appealed to him so strongly that while that existed unassuaged no happiness was possible for him. It was for them, not for himself, that he sought the way of escape from the misery of physical life. For them, not for himself, he felt the need of a higher life that could be lived by all.

So, finding all the ascetic practices unavailing, he decided instead to try the training of the mind along the lines of the highest meditation; and presently he seated himself beneath the Bodhi tree, determined to attain by the power of his own spirit the knowledge of which he was in search. There he sat in meditation reviewing all these things, studying deeply into the heart and cause of life and endeavouring to raise his consciousness to a higher level. At last by a mighty effort he succeeded, and then he saw unrolled before him the marvellous scheme of evolution and the true destiny of man. Thus he became the Buddha, the enlightened one; and then he turned to share with his fellow-men this wondrous knowledge that he had gained. He went forth to preach his new doctrine, commencing by the delivery of a sermon which is still preserved in the sacred books of his followers. In his own tongue, Pali (which is still for them the sacred language, just as Latin is that of the Catholic Church), this first sermon is known as the Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta, which has been interpreted to mean "The setting in motion of the royal chariot wheels of the Kingdom of Righteousness."

In several of the books of our modern Orientalists you may find a literal translation of it; but if you wish to catch the real spirit of what he said, once more you will do well to turn to the Eighth Book of Sir Edwin Arnold's wonderful poem. Perhaps the poet does not give us the literal meaning of each word as accurately as other Oriental scholars; perhaps his work is rather a splendid paraphrase than a verbal translation; but this at least I know, that he gives as no other has yet given in English the spirit which permeates this mighty Oriental faith. I have lived among these people; I have shared in their religious festivals and I know the feelings in

their hearts; and to read *The Light of Asia* brings the whole scene back before me vividly as I have seen it so many times; whereas the wooden and pedantic accuracy of the Orientalist calls forth no echo of the mystic music of the East.

Briefly, the Buddha set before his hearers what he called "The Middle Path." He declared that extremes in either direction are equally irrational; that on the one hand the life of the man of the world, wrapped up entirely in his business, pursuing dreams of wealth and power, is foolish and defective because it leaves out of account all that is really worthy of consideration. But he affirmed also that on the other hand the extreme asceticism which teaches each man to turn his back upon the world altogether, and to devote himself exclusively and selfishly to the endeavour to shut himself away from it and escape from it, is also foolish. He held that the "middle path" of truth and of duty is the best and the safest, and that while certainly the life devoted entirely to spirituality is the highest of all for those who are ready for it, there is also a good and true and spiritual life possible for the man who yet holds his place and does his work in the world. He based his doctrine solely on reason and on common-sense; he asked no man to believe anything blindly, but rather told him to open his eyes and look round him. He declared that in spite of all the sorrow and the misery of the world, the great scheme of which man is a part is a scheme of eternal justice, and that the law under which we are living is a good law, and needs only that we should understand it and adapt ourselves to it. He declared that man causes his own suffering by yielding himself perpetually to desire for that which he has not, and that happiness and contentment can be gained better by limiting desires than by increasing possessions. He preached this "middle path" with the most wonderful success for forty-five years in all parts of India, and eventually died at the age eighty at the town of Kusinagara in the year 543 B.C.

The dates which I have given above are those of the Eastern records; and although European Orientalists at first declined to accept them and tried to prove that the life of the Buddha was much nearer to the Christian era, further discovery has steadily forced them back until most of them now admit that the original records are reliable. The history and the edicts of the great Buddhist Emperor Asoka have done much to clear up this question of chronology; and the *Mahawanso* of Ceylon gives us a careful and detailed record which proves only the more definite and reliable the

more it is investigated. So that now the dates connected with the life of the Buddha are fairly accepted. How far we may depend upon the details of that life as accurate it is difficult to say. Probably the reverence and affection of his followers drew around his memory a certain mist or halo of legend, just as has been the case with all the other great religious teachers. Yet none can doubt that we have here a beautiful story embodying the life of a most saintly man of splendid purity of life and wonderful clearness of spiritual vision. As Monsieur Barthelemy St. Hilaire says: "His life is absolutely without stain. His constant heroism equals his conviction; he is the perfected example of all the virtues which he preaches; his abnegation, his charity, his unchanging sweetness never fail him for a single instant. . . . He prepares silently his doctrine through six years of labour and of meditation; he propagates it by the sole power of speech and of persuasion during more than half a century, and when he dies in the arms of his disciples it is with the certainty of a sage who has practised the highest all his life, and who is assured of having found the truth."

His Teaching

Let us turn now to examine the great principles of his doctrine. He himself was once asked whether it was possible for him to embody it in one Sutta, or verse of four lines, and in reply he spoke what follows:-

"Sabbapapassa akaranam;
Kusalassa upasampada;
Sa chittapariyo dapanam;
Etam Buddhana sasanam.

This may perhaps best be translated:-

"Cease to do evil;
Learn to do well;
Cleanse your own heart;

This is the religion of the Buddhas."

It will be seen at once that this is a fine and comprehensive definition. First of all the man is directed to give up every activity which is evil in any sense of that word; but he is by no means to rest contented with that. He

must take up activity in a fresh direction and “learn to do well.” Then, having thus regulated his conduct with regard to the outer world, he is instructed to cleanse his own heart – a command so far-reaching that there is little in the spiritual life which is not included within it. The whole foundation of the teaching of the Buddha was always common-sense and justice. He based his claim to be heard upon the fact that his teachings were clear and understandable; and he impressed this attitude strongly upon the minds of his followers – so much so that at an Ecumenical Council of the Buddhist monks held at Vaisali, when the question arose as to whether certain doctrines had really been part of the Buddha’s teaching, a resolution was unanimously passed to the effect that “That only can pass as teaching of the Buddha which is not in contradiction to sound reason.” (Schlagintweit’s Buddhism in Tibet, p.21.) One cannot but wish that the Ecumenical Councils of the Christian Church had made a similar resolution; for in that case the absurdities which have encrusted the true faith could never have been permitted to grow into gigantic but baseless structure of the orthodox theology of the present day.

This decision of the Council agrees also with what the Buddha himself had said to the people of the village of Kalama when they came to him and asked him what, amidst all the varied doctrines of the world, they ought to believe. His answer was; “Do not believe in a thing said merely because it is said; or in traditions because they have been handed down from antiquity; nor in rumours as such; nor in writings by sages, merely because sages wrote them; nor in fancies that you may suspect to have been inspired by a Deva (that is, in presumed spiritual inspiration); nor in inferences drawn from some haphazard assumption you may have made; nor because of what seems an analogical necessity; nor on the mere authority of your own teachers or Masters. But believe when the writing, doctrine, or saying is corroborated by your own consciousness. For thus I have taught you, not to believe merely because you have heard; but when you believe of your own consciousness, then to act accordingly and abundantly.” These words are quoted in Colonel Olcott’s Buddhist Catechism from the Kalama Sutta of the Anguttara Nikaya; and assuredly the attitude which they represent is a very fine one for a religious teacher to take.

Buddhism therefore has no creed; it simply required that a man shall recognize the facts which surround him. It is the only belief that the world has known which is entirely free from dogma, ceremony and priestcraft.

According to its teachings, within the unchangeable laws of righteousness, each man is absolutely the creator of himself and of his own destiny. The Buddhist is one who follows the instructions of the Buddha and lives the life which he has prescribed; so that there may be many among us who according to that test could be described as Buddhists, even though we may never have read a word of his wonderful utterances. His teaching also recognizes the different types of men, and the need of some of them for fuller knowledge than would be comprehensible to others. I had occasion to emphasize this point in speaking to you of Christianity, and exactly the same thing may be said of Buddhism. It is true that the Buddha is represented in the Parinibbana Sutta as declaring that he does not give with a closed fist, as do some teachers who keep some things back; yet though he evidently meant that he taught everything freely, it is equally certain that the real basis of the great law can only be understood by those who have perfected their powers of comprehension. We see that he spoke parables and recited stories for the unenlightened masses, just as the Christ did; but he also preached the Sutta Pitaka for the more advanced, while he gives the Vinaya Pitaka for the government of the monks of his order, and he perfected the Abhidhamma Pitaka, or philosophical and psychological teaching, for the highest order of minds. He insisted strongly that it is a possibility and a duty for every man to live a holy life even while he is yet engaged in the world; but he also taught, as every great teacher has done, that the highest of all lives is that devoted entirely to spiritual advancement and to the helping of humanity. For that purpose he founded the great monastic order called the Sangha, to which I shall have to refer later.

The Four Noble Truths

One interesting feature of the Buddha's teaching is the way in which he tabulates everything, arranging it under various heads for mnemonic purposes. In his first sermon he commences by the recital of his Four Noble Truths. These represent four links in a chain of reasoning, and each one of them is associated with a detailed explanation; but the whole thing is so arranged that a single word at once calls up to the mind of any student the whole argument, and it would scarcely be possible for even the least intelligent who had once learnt the chain of reasoning to forget any one of its links. His four truths are:

1. Sorrow.
2. The Cause of sorrow.
3. The ceasing of sorrow.
4. The path to the ceasing of sorrow.

The First Truth he explains in this way. All the life of the man of the world is a life which is either full of sorrow or at any moment liable to sorrow. Constantly the man is striving to attain something which he does not possess, and sorrowing because he does not get it; or, on the other hand, he is in constant fear of being dispossessed of something which he has already. The man suffers because he loses those whom he loves, or that to which he is strongly attached; he suffers sometimes because he desires affection which is not given to him, or because that which he loves is passing away from him. He suffers from a fear of death, either for himself or for those who are dear to him. So, all the way through, the life of the ordinary man in the world is a life of more or less disturbance and sorrow.

Then he passes on to the second of his Truths and proceeds to enquire what is the cause of this sorrow; and after careful analysis he comes to the conclusion that the cause of all sorrow is the lower desire. If a man has no desire for riches or for fame, he will remain serene and unruffled whether these come to him or whether they are taken away from him. If his affection is fixed at higher levels, if he loves his friend and not merely the physical body of his friend, then he can never be separated from him and there can be no decay or loss of that affection. Man sorrows sometimes when he finds old age descending upon him; but this is only because he has a keen desire for those physical faculties which he now finds to be leaving him. If he realized truly that the soul remains unchanged however the bodily faculties may alter, there would be no sorrow in this wearing out of the earthly garment.

So we are led on to the Third Noble Truth, the ceasing of sorrow; and naturally the way to escape sorrow is to put aside this lower desire. Thus he explains how if we fix our thoughts upon the highest and learn to withdraw our desire from lower levels, all sorrow will cease for us and we shall become serene and untroubled. A man may live happily in the physical world, if only he will not allow himself to be attached to it by desire. Be content with that you have, and take this lower life with calm philosophy, and then for you sorrow will have ceased. His Fourth Noble Truth expresses to us the way in which this absence of desire may be

attained. The path to this, he says, contains eight steps, and therefore it is constantly spoken of in Buddhist literature as “The Noble Eightfold Path.”

The first of these steps he states to be Right Belief; but we must be careful not to misunderstand him here. No blind belief is expected in Buddhism; indeed, as we have seen, such faith as that is distinctly deprecated. A man should believe not because he is told that such and such a thing is true, but because he sees it to be inherently reasonable. Still, unless he has assured himself that certain broad facts are true, he will be little likely to make the necessary effort to raise himself along the path of evolution. His definition of Right Belief comes very near to a statement of Theosophical principles; for the belief required is that in the perfect law of justice or cause and effect, and in the possibility of attaining the highest good by following the path of holiness. These postulates will lead him to the second step, which is Right Thought, and from that he passes naturally to the third and fourth, which are Right Speech and Right Action. Another necessity for the man still living in the world is the fifth step, Right Means of Livelihood; and the criterion by which a man may know whether his method of gaining a living is a right one is that it can do no harm to any living thing. The sixth of these steps is described as Right Energy, or Right Exertion. The Pali word means also strength; and the suggestion is that the man must not merely be passively good, but that he must exert himself to be of use to his fellow-men. The seventh step is translated as Right Remembrance; and it involves recollection and self-discipline – that a man should remember what he has done that is wrong, and so take care to avoid falling into the same error again. Then the last step is Right Concentration or Meditation – definite control of thought and the direction of it toward high and unselfish objects. All these eight steps he suggests as necessities in order that a man, while living in the world, may be so far detached from its power as to live wisely and happily. For the man in ordinary life are given also the Pancha Sila, or five commandments, to which I shall refer presently.

The Order of the Yellow Robe

The Buddha has other rules, however, for his Sangha – the order of the Yellow Robe – those who help the world, as they are often called. This Sangha is in many ways not unlike the Christian monastic orders. In it, as in them, the monks are vowed to poverty and chastity; but there is this

decided advantage in the Buddhist rule, that no one is permitted to take vows in perpetuity, as is done in the Christian orders. We know that it not infrequently happens in European countries that a man enters some monastic body under the influence of religious enthusiasm, or perhaps sometimes of disgust for the world, or as the result of some great sorrow. Later, when the rush of feeling has passed away, he may discover that he has in reality no vocation for the religious life; and often much misery results from the fact that his vows are irrevocable and that no change is now possible for him.

In the Buddhist system full provision is made for such a case as this. Any one who by his life has shown himself fit to do so may prepare himself for what is called ordination or admission to the brotherhood of monks. If after a few months or a few years he should find himself no longer able to adhere to the strict rules of the monastic life, he may put off the robe again and enter once more into the ordinary life of the world without any reproach of any kind attaching to him. No one thinks the worse of him in any way; he has simply tried to live upon a level for which he is not quite fitted; he needs a few years longer in the world in order that he may develop himself to the requisite position; but no one blames him for this. Indeed, in Burma it is the custom for all the male population to put on the robes for a short time at least at some period of their lives. Those who feel this to be the existence best suited for them retain them and become permanently members of the order; others put off their robes after a year or so of monasticism and enter the ranks of ordinary life, by no means the worse, but much the better, for their short experience of something higher.

It must be remembered that to be a great religious teacher in the East is not at all the same thing as to be the head of some great faith here in the West. The Eastern teacher does not enjoy a princely revenue, and drive about in carriages with a state equal to that of many a monarch. It is just because many Christian bishops and Christian missionaries live along such lines as these that most Orientals do not believe them to be truly religious teachers at all. For in the East the religious teacher is one who devotes his whole life to the highest spirituality, who observes absolute purity of heart and mind, who never touches money in any form, whose first rule of life is that he must possess no property excepting the robes that he wears; and even these robes are so made as to be valueless if sold.

On the other hand, so great is the universal veneration in the East for this spiritual life that the deference paid to the poorest or youngest of the teachers is greater than that paid to the king. The reverence given to the Yellow Robe of the monks of Buddha is striking and beautiful, and I have again and again seen the wealthiest and most influential of the city magnates rise respectfully and stand with bowed heads in the presence even of a child probationer who had but just put on the robes. The greatest respect is shown in Ceylon to the hereditary Chiefs of the people – the descendants of the ancient royal family; I have repeatedly seen the passers-by retire altogether from the road as the Chieftain passed along it, the people standing at a lower level and bowing until he had gone his way. Yet these Chieftains gathered in solemn assembly will immediately rise to their feet at the entrance of the youngest member of the Sangha, and will remain standing until requested to be seated; so great is the homage given to the Yellow Robe all over the Buddhist world.

The Life of the Monk

The life of the monks is one of absolute detachment. Not only do they own no earthly possessions, but they take only simple food, just as it is given to them, without choice or question. Their lives are spent in study and in meditation, though they are also expected to preach to the people at certain set times. The principal festivity of the Buddhist is the day of the full moon; but in a subordinate way the other quarters of the moon's age are also celebrated, so that practically they come to have a weekly day of visiting the temple, much as in our land people go to church on Sunday. The monks also have it as a duty to give advice and admonition to any one who may come to them, and to read what is called the Pirit Ceremony – that is to say, the words of consolation and blessing – on certain occasions in public, and also (when requested) at a private house when any one is sick.

The members of the Sangha have often been described in books of travel, and indeed generally in the literature on the subject, as "Buddhist priests", but the truth is that that designation is both inaccurate and misleading. The ideas which would be associated either in Catholicism or in Judaism with the word priest are entirely foreign to the whole teaching of Buddhism. There is no thought of any intermediary between man and the great law of Divine Justice – no suggestion that man needs any such work done for him as a priest is supposed to do. So that when we meet

with this expression, “a Buddhist priest,” we must always bear in mind that in reality it means nothing more than a monk – one whose life is set apart and devoted to religion. His development is supposed to lead him entirely away from the things of this world and into the higher conditions of which I have written in *Clairvoyance* and *The Other Side of Death*. He is supposed definitely to have set his feet upon the Path of Holiness – the Path which leads him to Nirvana. In the concluding chapters of *Invisible Helpers* I have given in full detail the steps of this Path, and the qualifications which the candidate must develop at each of these steps; so I will not repeat them here, although I should most earnestly commend their study to every one who wishes to understand the beautiful and elevated spirit of this glorious religion.

Nirvana

There is another point, however, with regard to Nirvana, the goal of this Path, which I must not omit to mention, because there has been a widespread misunderstanding upon the subject. The description which the Buddha himself gives of Nirvana is so far above the comprehension of any man who is trained only in ordinary and worldly methods of thought that it is little wonder that it should have been misunderstood at first sight by the European Orientalist. Even Max Muller, the great Oxford Sanskritist, held for many years that Nirvana was simply equivalent to annihilation; and unfortunately this misconception seems to have been widely spread. Later in his life, with further and deeper study, he came to understand that in this he had been mistaken; and indeed no one who has lived in the East among the Buddhists can for a moment suppose that they regard annihilation as the end which they are striving to reach.

It is quite true that the attainment of Nirvana does involve utter annihilation of that lower side of man which is in truth all that we know of him at the present time. The personality and everything connected with the lower vehicles is impermanent and will disappear. If we endeavor to realize what man would be when deprived of all which is included under those terms, we shall see that for us at our present stage it would be difficult to comprehend that anything remained. And yet the truth is that everything remains – that in the glorified spirit that then exists, all the essence of all the qualities which have been developed through the centuries of strife and stress in earthly incarnation will inhere to the fullest possible degree. The man has become more than man, since he is

now on the threshold of Divinity; yet he is still himself, even though it be a so much wider self. Many definitions have been given of Nirvana, and naturally none of them can possibly be satisfactory; perhaps the best on the whole is that of peace in omniscience.

When, many years ago, I was preparing a simple introductory catechism of their religion for Buddhist children, the Chief Abbot Sumangala himself gave me as the best definition of Nirvana to put before them that it was a condition of peace and blessedness so high above our present state that it was impossible for us to understand it. Surely that is far removed from the idea of annihilation. Truly all that we now call the man has disappeared; but that is not because the individuality is annihilated, but because it is lost in divinity.

The Practical Result

Let us turn to our third heading and consider something of the practical side of this great world-religion as it may be seen at the present day. So far as I have seen, I must certainly bear testimony that it works exceedingly well. Of course there are good and bad men in every nation, and there are many nominal Buddhists in Burma and Ceylon just as there are nominal Christians in England; but statistics show that the proportion of crime to the population is much lower among the Buddhists of Ceylon than it is in any European country or in America.

One great reason for this undoubted fact is that we see so much crime arise from drink, and drink is utterly forbidden by the Buddhist religion. That one fact in itself makes an enormous difference in the life of a nation. Unfortunately Europeans have introduced many new forms of intoxicating liquor among the Buddhist peoples, as they have carried them everywhere else; for this is a mark of their so-called civilization. So that here and there a man may be found even among the Buddhists who violates the precepts of his religion and partakes of the forbidden liquor; but he is keenly aware of the degradation which this entails, and the popular opinion invariably regards him as a wicked man, to quite the same extent as we in these Western countries should apply that designation to a robber or one who committed deeds of violence. I suppose it is difficult for a Western reader to grasp at once all the changes which the absence of this one fatal habit make in the life of a nation.

I wish it were possible for me to describe how this grand old Oriental religion permeates the daily existence of those who profess it, so that you might have before you a perfect picture of that wonderful Eastern life, and might feel the fascination of that Oriental atmosphere which is so totally unlike anything experienced elsewhere. The attitude of mind towards religion in the East is something so different from our position with regard to it here, that it is with difficulty that a man who has not seen it and lived in the midst of it can be brought fully to comprehend it. Here men belong to various sects, and are not infrequently bigoted and bitter in maintaining the tenets of their particular sect and denouncing those of all others; yet in the vast majority of cases this profession of religious belief is kept exclusively for Sunday, and it has practically no influence over the man's daily life during the rest of the week.

In the East the whole attitude of man is the reverse of this. Each has his religious convictions, yet each is tolerant of the convictions of others. The Muhammadan truly is almost as fanatical as the Christian; but the Brahman and the Buddhist are always ready to admit that those who do not believe as they do may nevertheless be on the way towards the light, and they will always say that if even the most ignorant unbeliever does his duty according to his lights in this life he will assuredly in his next incarnation have further opportunities of learning something more of the truth than he knows at present, and so will finally attain his goal just as much as they themselves.

Even the intolerant Mohammedan differs greatly from the average Christian; for at least his religion is a vivid and real thing to him, and, such as it is, it permeates his very life, and is to him the dearest and the greatest thing in it. Every traveller in the East will have noticed how at the moment when the call of the Muezzin rings from the minaret every Muhammadan within hearing, whatever he may be doing or however great a crowd may surround him, immediately pauses, draws forth his prayer-carpet, spreads it before him, and prostrates himself in prayer. How many of our ordinary Christians would be willing thus to turn aside three times a day in the midst of their trafficking and their business, and confess their faith before all men by acts of prayer and worship performed in the public streets?

So it is with the Buddhist also; he has no such public prayer as this, and yet his religion permeates his whole life, somewhat in the way which is

the case with a few of the most highly devotional people here in the Roman Catholic Church. The majority of us in these countries seem to keep our religion and our daily business life in two watertight compartments, so that they may in no way interfere with one another. To the Buddhist that attitude is incomprehensible and insincere, for to him the religion is everything, and although sometimes in daily life he may depart from its precepts, he recognizes afterwards with sorrow that he has done so, and never attempts to justify himself with the plea of business interests, as men so often do with us.

Buddhism in Burma

By far the best account that I read of the practical effect of the religion upon its votaries is contained in *The Soul of a People*, by H. Fielding Hall. It is indeed refreshing to find a writer who so fully understands and appreciates a faith other than his own – who has so entirely comprehended the spirit of Buddhism as it lives in the hearts of the people. He tells us that under its benign sway “the Burmese are a community of equals, in a sense that has probably never been known elsewhere.”

He bears high testimony to the earnestness of the monks, and describes how in the time of the Burmese War, while the country was seething with strife, they “went about their business calmly as ever, preaching of peace, not war, of kindness, not hatred, of pity, not revenge.” The difference between Buddhism and our modern Occidental theology was well expressed by an English cavalry officer, who explained that Buddhism would never do for a man of his profession. “What the soldier wants,” he said, “is a personal god who will always be on his side, always share his opinions, always support him against every one else. But a law that points out unalterably that right is always right, and wrong always wrong, that nothing can alter one into the other, nothing can ever make killing righteous and violence honourable – that is no creed for a soldier.”

Mr. Hall evidently feels very strongly the charm of a common-sense, consistent religion, which recognizes the unity of nature and the divine life which underlies it. In another passage in his delightful book he draws the distinction between the comfortless petrification of modern theories; and the living beauty and romance of real knowledge:

“Knowledge so far has brought us only death. Later on it will bring us a new life. But now all is dark. And because we have lost our belief in fairies, because we do not now think that there are goblins in our caves, because there is no spirit in the winds nor voice in the thunder, we have come to think that the trees and the rocks, the flowers and the storm, are all dead things. They are made up, we say, of materials that we know, they are governed by laws we have discovered, and there is no life anywhere in nature. To the Buddhist, not less than to the Greek of long ago, all nature is alive.”

The Offering in the Temple

Let us see now what are the especial commandments or ordinances of this religion which the man has to obey in common life. We have spoken before of the Pancha Sila, or five commandments; but the truth is that, although these are distinctly more far-reaching than our own Decalogue, they are not really commandments at all. Each of them is not an order but an assertion; the form is not a command from on high, “Thou shalt not do this,” but it is an affirmation by the man, “I will observe the teaching to avoid this sin.” The Buddhist visits his temple, as we have said, on one day of the week at the least, but many contrive to present themselves there for a few minutes daily. And they never go empty-handed, for each devotee will carry with him a flower, or sometimes a bunch of flowers, which he lays upon the altar of the Buddha with a few words of love and gratitude.

Wishing to arrive at the idea in the minds of the simple peasantry who perform this ceremony daily, I have frequently asked such a man through an interpreter, “Why do you offer these flowers to the Buddha? do you think that it pleases him?” The man would invariably reply with a look of surprise, “How can it please him, since he has entered Nirvana more than two thousand years ago?” If I still pressed the question as to why the flowers were offered, the reply would always come: “We offer them out of gratitude to the memory of the Founder of our religion who has showed us the way of escape from the wheel of birth and death; and we lay them before his image with the desire that our souls may be pure as the flower, and like it may shed a sweet perfume around us.” Even the word altar is perhaps misleading, for the Buddhist has no conception of what we mean by the offering of sacrifice or of worship. To him the Lord Buddha is not in any sense a god, but a man just like ourselves, though so

infinitely far in advance of us; not in the least one to be worshipped, but only to be deeply revered and loved.

There is at least one inestimable advantage which can be claimed for this great religion, that never through all its history have its altars been stained with blood; never throughout the centuries has Buddhism even once descended to the level of persecuting those who did not think along its lines. It is the only great religion of the world which has this honourable distinction, that it has never persecuted. For two thousand four hundred and fifty years it has run its course, with not a drop of blood on its onward march, not a groan along its pathway. It has never deceived the people, never practised pious fraud, never discouraged literature, never appealed to prejudice, never used the sword. If this could be said even of a small and obscure sect, it would a grand claim to be able to make; but when we remember the vast extent of this wondrous religion and the number of races which are included within its sway, it is indeed a marvellous fact.

As Sir Edwin Arnold remarks: "Four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama; and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend at the present time over Nepal and Ceylon, over the whole Eastern Peninsula to China, Japan, Tibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland. India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent empire of belief; for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of his birth, the mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddhist precepts. More than a third of mankind therefore owe their moral and religious ideas to this illustrious Prince. Forests of flowers are daily laid upon his stainless shrines, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula, 'I take refuge in Buddha.' "

The Three Guides

These last words are a translation, although not quite an accurate one, of the opening words of the Tisarana, the recitation of which with the five precepts constitutes the only public formula used by the Southern Church of Buddhism. The word Saranam, which has so often been rendered "refuge," seems to mean much more nearly "a guide," so that the

threefold formula which is repeated by each Buddhist as he visits his temple would really be translated thus:

I take the Lord Buddha as my guide.

I take his Law as my guide.

I take his Order as my guide.

The word Dharma, which is usually translated "law," really bears a much wider signification than that English term. It is not in the least a law or series of commandments ordained by the Buddha, but his statement of the universal laws under which the Universe exists, and consequently of the duties of man as part of that mighty scheme. It is in this sense that the expressions quoted above are employed by the Buddhist. In pronouncing the Tisarana he expresses his acceptance of the Lord Buddha as his guide and teacher; his adherence to the doctrine which the Buddha taught; and his recognition of the great order of Buddhist monks as the practised interpreters of the meaning of the doctrine. This does not in the least imply the acceptance of the interpretation of any particular monk, but only that of the Order in the most catholic sense; he believes that interpretation to be accurate which is held by the entire Brotherhood in all places and at all times.

The Five Precepts

Following upon this confession of faith comes the recitation of the five precepts to which we have already referred, which in Ceylon are shortly called the Pansil. These run as follows:

1. I observe the precept to refrain from the destruction of life.
2. I observe the precept to refrain from taking that which is not mine.
3. I observe the precept to refrain from unlawful intercourse.
4. I observe the precept to refrain from falsehood.
5. I observe the precept to refrain from using intoxicating liquors or stupefying drugs.

It can hardly fail to strike the intelligent person that, as Colonel Olcott observes, "One who observes these strictly must escape from every cause productive of human misery, for if we study history we shall find that it has all sprung from one or another of these causes. The farseeing wisdom of the Buddha is most plainly shown in the first, third, and fifth;

for the taking of life, sensuality, and the use of intoxicants cause at least ninety-five per cent of the suffering among men." It is interesting to notice how each of these precepts goes further than the corresponding Jewish commandment. Instead of being told to do no murder, we find ourselves enjoined to take no life whatever; instead of being commanded not to steal, we have the more far-reaching precept not to take that which does not belong to us, which would obviously cover the acceptance of praise not honestly due to us, and many another case quite outside of what is commonly called stealing. It will be observed also that the third of these precepts includes a great deal more than the seventh of the commandments of Moses, forbidding not only one particular type of unlawful intercourse, but all types. Instead of being forbidden to bear false witness in a court of law, we are enjoined to avoid falsehood altogether. I have often thought of what a good thing it would have been for all these European countries which have taken up the teaching of Christ if the legendary Moses had included in his Decalogue the fifth of these Buddhist precepts – the instruction to touch no intoxicating liquor nor stupefying drugs. How much simpler would be all our essential problems if that commandment were observed in England and America as it is observed in Buddhist countries!

The recitation of the Tisarana and the Pancha Sila which I have just described is the nearest approach of the Southern Buddhist to what we should call a public service. There is, however, the regular weekly preaching by the monks, which is attended by large crowds of people. There is usually a large preaching-hall attached to each of the temples, but in many cases this is used only in wet weather, and when the day is fine the preaching is held in the palm-grove near the temple. There is a great deal of this preaching, and it is often carried on far into the night, different monks relieving one another, and taking up the word in turn. I suppose that it is scarcely possible for you in these temperate climes to form any idea of the peaceful and almost unearthly beauty of such a scene. The splendid light of the tropical moon, brilliant enough to enable one easily to read the type of newspaper, pours down upon the many-coloured crowd, flecked with the shadows of the graceful waving palm leaves, and in the midst sits the yellow-robed monk pouring forth fluently his simple and homely address to the villagers. Usually he recites some story or parable from the sacred books, and then proceeds to explain it. A curious old custom which I have seen many times in Ceylon is that one monk preaches in the sacred language, Pali, and another interprets what

he says sentence by sentence into Sinhalese, the common tongue of the people. It is evidently a relic of the time, more than two thousand years ago, when Buddhism was being preached in Ceylon by those missionaries from Northern India whose mother tongue was Pali; and the fact that it should thus have been preserved is a curious instance of the conservatism of the immemorial East.

The Chanting of the Blessing

One other ceremony the Southern Church possesses to which a passing reference has already been made – that of the recitation of the verses of Paritta or blessing. It is of so interesting a nature as to merit a somewhat detailed description. In essence it is, as the name implies, a recitation of blessings and invocations for the purpose of warding off evil influences – the chanting of those verses from the sacred books of the Buddhists in which the Buddha declares that blessing follows upon certain actions, and also of hymns from the same books invoking the benevolent attention of the sun-god and of the Arhats and Buddhas. The principal of these is the beautiful hymn of the peacock-king from the Jataka stories. These Pirit verses are chanted by the Buddhist monks on various occasions, alike of sorrow and of rejoicing. We may divide such occasions roughly into two classes – public and private.

The most common example of the latter is that in case of serious sickness or the approach of death, one or two monks from the nearest temple are often invited to come and chant these verses of benediction by the bedside of the sufferer, keeping in mind all the time an earnest wish for his recovery – or, if that is considered hopeless, for his welfare in the condition after death. The monks do not pray for the sick man in our sense of the word, for that is no part of their faith; they simply chant their verses, with the will to help and to avert any evil influence ever strongly present in their minds.

Of course no remuneration is offered to the monks, for their rules forbid them to touch money under any circumstances; a meal may perhaps be given to them, if the ceremony be performed in the morning, but later than noon they cannot accept even that, as they eat nothing after the middle of the day.

The public ceremony is a more imposing affair, and lasts much longer. It takes place usually on some festival, such as the celebration of the dedication of a temple. On such occasion the simple festivities and processions will sometimes last for a week or even a fortnight; and during the whole of this time the recitation of Pirit is going on. Just as in connection with some churches and convents there is a "Confraternity of Perpetual Adoration," whose members relieve one another in regular watches in order to keep up night and day continuous worship before the altar, so from the beginning to the end of this Buddhist festival the monotonous chant of the recitations from the sacred books never ceases.

Attached to most of the temples is a Dharmasalawa or preaching-hall, and it is in this that the Pirit is chanted. This preaching hall is so entirely different from any building used for similar purposes in the West, that perhaps a description of it may not be uninteresting. Its size varies with the means at the disposal of the builder, but its shape is invariably square. The lofty roof is supported simply by pillars, and it has no wall of any sort – nor does it contain any seats, the people disposing themselves on mats on the earthen floor.

In the centre is a large raised square platform, having pillars at its corners and a low railing round it; and round the edge of this, inside the railing, runs a low seat – often scarcely more than a step – on which (facing inwards) the members of the Sangha or monastic order sit, while one of their number addresses the people, who are thus, it will be seen, not grouped in front of the speaker only, as is usual in the West, but surround him on all sides. On the platform, in the centre of the hollow square thus formed by the monks, is usually a small table with flowers upon it, or sometimes a relic, if the temple happens to possess one.

When no permanent building of this sort exists, a temporary one (but always exactly on the same plan) is put up for the festival; and a stranger is surprised to see how substantial these temporary erections of bamboo, palm leaves and coloured paper can be made to appear under the skilful hands of native workmen.

It is in this preaching-hall, then, whether permanent or temporary, that the constant recitation of the Pirit goes on; and there also three times in each day the whole available band of monks assembles to chant the more imposing Maha Pirit – an interesting mesmeric ceremony which merits

special description. It should be premised that before the ceremony commences a huge pot of water carefully covered has been placed in the centre of the platform and numerous threads or strings have been arranged to run from pillar to pillar above the heads of the monks as they sit – this system of threads being connected by several converging lines with the pot of water in the centre.

At the time of the Maha Pirit, when all the monks are seated in a hollow square as above described, a piece of rope, about the thickness of an ordinary clothesline, is produced and laid on the knees of the monks, each of whom holds it in his hands all through the ceremony, thus establishing a connection with his fellows not unlike that of the circle at a spiritualistic séance. Care is taken that after the circle is completed one of the ends of the rope shall be carried up and connected with the threads and strings above, so that the whole arrangement in reality converges on the pot of water.

This being done the Maha Pirit commences, and the whole body of monks, with the united will to bless, recite for some forty minutes a series of benedictions from the sacred books. The portions selected vary, but to give an idea of their general nature I will quote from the Mahamangala Sutta, which is one of those most frequently chosen. A question has been put to the Buddha: “Men, yearning for good, have held divers things to be desirable; do thou inform us, O Master, what are in reality the greatest blessings.” In reply the Buddha says:-

Not to serve the foolish
But to serve the wise,
To honor those worthy of honor;
This is the greatest blessing.

To dwell in a pleasant land,
To have done good deeds in a former birth,
To have a soul filled with right desires;
This is the greatest blessing.

Much insight and much education,
Self-control and a well-trained mind,
Pleasant words that are well spoken;
This is the greatest blessing.

To support father and mother,
To cherish wife and child,
To follow a peaceful calling;
This is the greatest blessing.

To bestow alms and live righteously,
To give help to one's kindred,
To do deeds which cannot be blamed;
This is the greatest blessing.

To abhor and cease from sin,
To abstain from strong drink,
Not to be weary in well-doing;
This is the greatest blessing.

To be long-suffering and meek,
To associate with the tranquil,
Religious talk at due seasons;
This is the greatest blessing.

Self –restraint and purity,
The knowledge of the Four Great Truths,
The realization of Nirvana;
This is the greatest blessing.

Beneath the stroke of life's changes
The soul that stands unshaken,
Passionless, unsorrowing, secure;
This is the greatest blessing.

Invincible on every side
Is he who acteth thus;
On every side he walks in safety;
His is the greatest blessing

As this ceremony of the Maha Pirit is performed three times daily for seven days, and the influence kept up in the interval by the ceaseless chanting of the ordinary Pirit, the student of mesmerism will have no difficulty in believing that by the end of that time the cord, the connected

threads and the pot of water in the centre of the circle are all thoroughly magnetized.

On the last day comes the crowning glory of the festival – the distribution of the mesmerized water. First of all the principal men and honoured guests go up to the steps of the platform, and the chief monk, uttering a form of benediction, pours three times a few drops of the water into their outstretched palms, they bending reverently the while. At the conclusion of the benediction the recipient drinks a little of the water and applies the rest to his forehead, the whole ceremony to a Western mind strangely suggesting a combination of two well-known Christian rites.

The rest of the water is then poured into smaller vessels and distributed by the assistants among the crowd, each person receiving it in the same manner. The mesmerized thread is cut into pieces and distributed among the people, who wear it around the arm or neck as a talisman.

It is not uncommon to attach special threads to the circle, and allow them to hang down outside the platform, so that any who are suffering from fever, rheumatism, or other ailments, may hold the ends in their hands during the chanting of the Maha Pirit, and the patient frequently seems to derive advantage from this tapping the mesmeric battery.

This much of ceremony, at any rate, the Southern Church of Buddhism possesses; but I think we must all agree that it is a harmless and interesting one.

The Two Churches

The great Northern Church of Buddhism has many more public ceremonies; but as I have no personal experience of them I will not repeat to you that which you yourselves may read in any book on the subject. You may remember how in speaking of Christianity I explained that every religion in course of time inevitably departed somewhat from the primitive teaching given by its founder. This has been less the case with Buddhism than with any other of the great world-religions; yet nevertheless it is an undoubted fact that the tenets have varied with the lapse of time. Curiously enough the two churches have varied in exactly opposite directions; the Northern Church has undoubtedly added, while the Southern Church, in its zeal to retain the purity of the doctrine, and to

avoid accretions, has lost something of its pristine fullness. The Northern Church spread chiefly among the wilder tribes of Central Asia, and has been considerably influenced by relics of their original nature-worship. If one reads any of the more accurate accounts of the Buddhism of Tibet, it will at once be noted that a great deal of this nature-worship exists in connection with it. Unknown deities appear, many of them of a dangerous nature and requiring propitiation; while many of the orders and hierarchies of Devas and other beings have taken on a gloomier cast, and are regarded as at least potentially evil. On the other hand some part at least of the highest metaphysics is clearly preserved, the Amitabha and Avalokiteshvara of their system corresponding closely to Parabrahm (the unmanifested) and to Ishvara (the manifested Logos) among the Hindus.

The Southern Church, on the other hand, has almost entirely refused accretions of any sort. In Burma, though one may see hundreds of images in some of the great temples, yet they are every one images of the Buddha himself in many different positions. In Ceylon, it is true, images of Hindu deities, of Vishnu and Subrahmanya, are often to be seen, presumably as a concession to the Hindu faith of the later Tamil rulers of Ceylon, but even so they are invariably represented as inferior to the Buddha, and as acting under his orders. The Southern Church has somewhat forgotten the higher metaphysics, and gives but little study at the present day to the Abhidhamma Pitaka, in which all the higher philosophical teaching is contained. It devotes itself, however, with great assiduity to those other books which expound the rules of daily life, and also those which prescribe the life of the monks.

Materialistic Tendencies

Its tendency has been on the whole distinctly materialistic; and it has fastened so determinedly upon those texts in which the Buddha combats the idea of the permanence of our present personality, that it has practically come to deny the definite survival of the soul at all. Almost any monk of the Southern Church, if he were asked as to the immortality of the soul, would unhesitatingly deny that Buddhism held any such doctrine, and would carefully proceed to explain that all that we usually mean by the soul of man – his thoughts, his disposition, his feelings, all that makes him an individual apart from others – all these things, he would tell us, are impermanent and do not survive to the end of the cycle of incarnations.

If he were then pressed as to what it is that does pass over from life to life, he would confidently answer that it is the karma of the man – that is to say, the result of his thoughts and his actions; but that the persons who in the next life enjoys or suffers the results of this life is in reality different from the man living now. Of course this is true if we understand the technical meaning of the word “person”; but the average monk makes no such distinction as this, and is so intensely occupied in resisting anything like the ghost of an idea of the personal immortality of John Jones or Thomas Brown, that he passes into the opposite extreme and practically denies immortality altogether. In every expression of his daily life, however, he betrays that this is not in reality his true meaning, for he constantly speaks of any suffering which comes to him as the consequence of something which he did in a previous birth, and every Buddhist sermon is closed with the benediction or pious address to the congregation, “May you all attain Nirvana.” As it is invariably and inevitably recognized that Nirvana will be attained only after many lives have enabled the aspirant to reach its perfection, this is of course conclusive as to the survival of an individual ego.

The Permanent Ego

The idea that the Buddha preached the non-existence of the self rests principally on some of the later and non-canonical books, such as The Questions of King Milinda. It is chiefly based on certain answers which he gives upon the question of the self and the non-self, which are exactly in the manner of the Upanishads. He tells us that neither the form, nor the sensations, nor the perceptions, nor the impressions, nor the mind is the self. He by no means says that the self does not exist, but that the body and all these other possessions which are generally mistaken for the self are not that in reality.

The self is something beyond them all, and he states that when it recognizes itself as different from all else and divests itself of all attachment, by absence of attachment it is made free. This again seems conclusive as to the existence of a permanent self; for if the self does not exist, who is it that is to be made free? Our Western minds, untrained in the ideas of the Hindus to whom the Buddha addressed his sermons, see nothing but annihilation before them when they hear that even reason is stated not to be the self. Few can comprehend the idea that mind and

reason, and even much that is behind these, no matter how sublime they be, are essentially merely vehicles, themselves composed of matter.

The true self transcends them all; and we may find abundant evidence in the direct teaching of the Buddha which contradicts the theory that he denied this presiding ego. Let me quote here only one instance from the Samannaphala Sutta of the Digha-Nikaya. After first mentioning the condition and training of the mind that are necessary for success in spiritual progress, the Buddha describes how a man can recover the memory of his past lives, and how he sees all the scenes in which he was in any way concerned passing in succession before his mind's eye. He illustrates it by saying: "If a man goes out from his own village to another, and thence to another, he may think thus: I indeed went from my own village to that other. There I stood thus, I sat in this manner; thus I spoke, and thus I remained silent. From that village again I went to another, and I did the same there. The same 'I am' returned from that village to my own village. In the very same way, O King, the ascetic, when his mind is pure, knows his former births. He thinks: 'In such a place I had a name, I was born in such a family, such was my caste, such was my food, and such and such a way I experienced pleasure and pain, and my life extended through in some other place, and there also I had such and such conditions. Thence removed, the same "I" am now born here.' "

This quotation shows very clearly the doctrine of the Buddha with regard to the reincarnating ego. He gives illustrations also in the same Sutta of the manner in which an ascetic can know the past births of others, - how he can see them die in one place, and after the sorrows and joys of hell and heaven, the same men are born again somewhere else. It is true that in the Brahmajala Sutta he mentions all the various aspects of the soul, and says that they do not absolutely exist, because their existence depends upon "contact" - that is to say, upon relation. But in thus denying the absolute reality of the soul he agrees with the other great Indian teachers; for the existence not only of the soul, but even of the Logos Himself is true only relatively. Untrained minds frequently misunderstand these ideas, but the careful student of Oriental thought will not fail to grasp exactly what is meant, and to realize that the teaching of the Buddha in this respect is exactly that given now by Theosophy.

Theosophy and the Religions

Naturally it is only the barest outline of this magnificent system which I have been able to put before you tonight; yet I hope that what I have said may give you some slight idea of another of the world's great religions, and show you that however much its outward form may differ, however unlike our own are the surroundings in which it flourishes, it also is but another statement of the glorious truth which lies behind all religions alike. Often in endeavouring to explain Theosophy we are met with the objection that it is identical with Hinduism, or with Buddhism, and that it is simply an attempt to propagate one or the other of these religions here in the West. We can meet that only with the careful and patient explanation that in Theosophy we do not seek to propagate any religion, but rather to set forth the ancient wisdom that underlies them all. To many a Western mind its teachings seem to savour of the Oriental religions, because, as a matter of fact, those religions have retained within their popular doctrine more of the great truths of nature than has the orthodox faith as it is commonly taught in Europe; and consequently some of the first ideas which a Theosophist acquires from the study of our literature are likely to remind him of what he has heard of these great Eastern systems. In one sense such an objection has truth in it, for Theosophy is identical with esoteric Buddhism and Hinduism, but then so it is also with esoteric Christianity – the latter being well shown in Mrs. Besant's admirable book under that title.

It is not only here that such an objection has been raised against Theosophical teaching. In India there have been men who have misunderstood Theosophy in a similar way – who, because the founders of the Society and some of its prominent members and officials happen to be Buddhists by religion, have hinted that the whole work of the Society is nothing but the propagation of Buddhism; and this remark has occasioned hesitation on the part of some Indians who were about to join its ranks. In Ceylon and other Buddhist countries the misunderstanding has taken the opposite direction, and some Buddhists whose zeal outran their discretion and their knowledge, have accused our Theosophical leaders of unduly favouring the faith of our Hindu brothers. The very fact that such contradictory reports exist ought to show where the truth lies to those who have eyes to see – whose minds are large enough, whose heads are steady enough to stand upon the real Theosophical platform.

The Theosophical Standpoint

The motto of our Society is “There is no religion higher than truth, “ and as a corporate body it holds no particular belief or dogma. No one on joining it is required to change his faith, or is even asked what his faith is. We have members among Hindus, Buddhists, Parsis, Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians, and each is entirely at liberty to seek to attain the highest truth along the lines of thought to the use of which he is most accustomed; indeed, adherents of each of these systems have again and again spoken gratefully of the flood of light which Theosophy has thrown upon the real meaning of the more obscure points in the teaching handed down to them from their ancestors. The only stipulation made when a man joins our ranks is that he shall show to his brothers the same enlightened tolerance and kindly courtesy which he himself would wish to receive at their hands.

This is the true Theosophical standpoint; but it is a high one, and its air is too rarefied for the respiration of the sectarian or the bigot. He finds himself unable to exist at this unaccustomed altitude, and he must either sink back again into his own dismal swamp of self-complacency, or cast off forever his shell of spiritual pride and evolve into a higher and nobler creature. No wonder then that those who can see no light but that which shines through their own tiny lamps, should be unable to grasp so great a religious idea, and should consequently misunderstand these leaders of thought whose minds are cast in a nobler mould than their own. Truth is one, but its aspects are many; and on the lower levels its pursuit often seems to lead men in different directions, just as to two travellers who approach a mountain from different sides, the upward road leads in one case towards the north and in the other towards the south, so that each might well suppose the other to be entirely wrong. Yet ever as they reach the higher levels and the purer air, the searchers, however unconsciously, are drawing nearer and nearer to each other, until that supreme moment arrives when they stand side by side upon the loftiest peak, and for the first time fully realize the difference between the real and the unreal.

Perhaps of all the great religions it is Buddhism which comes closest to this which I have outlined as the true Theosophical attitude. As Sir Edwin Arnold remarks: “This venerable religion has in it the eternity of a universal hope, the immortality of a boundless love, an indestructible element of faith in final good, and the proudest assertion ever made of human freedom.” How high is its aim, how noble and unselfish its teachings, I cannot hope to tell you in so short a speech as this. But this

grand old faith will well repay your closer study, for in its scriptures you will find much of the purest Theosophy. Let me end this brief sketch by reading to you a beautiful poetical translation by Sir Edwin Arnold of the first chapter of one of the principal books of the Buddhist scriptures, the Dhammapada. This translation was written in 1889 by Sir Edwin for a little periodical called *The Buddhist*, which I was then editing in Colombo.

THE DHAMMAPADA

Thought in the mind hath made us. What we are
By thought was wrought and built. If a man's mind
Hath evil thoughts, pain comes on him as comes
The wheel the ox behind.

All that we are is what we thought and willed;
Our thoughts shape us and frame. If one endure
In purity of thought, joy follows him
As his own shadow – sure.

“He hath defamed me, wronged me, injured me,
Abased me, beaten me!” If one should keep
Thoughts like these angry words within his breast
Hatred will never sleep.

“He hath defamed me, wronged me, injured me,
Abased me. Beaten me!” If one should send
Such angry words away for pardoning thoughts
Hatreds will have an end.

For never anywhere at any time
Did hatred cease by hatred. Always 'tis
By love that hatred ceases – only love;
The ancient law is this.

The many, who are foolish, have forgot –
Or never knew – how mortal wrongs pass by;
But they who know and who remember, let
Transient quarrels die.

Whoso abides, looking for joy, unschooled,
Gluttonous, weak, in idle luxuries,
Mara will overthrow him, as fierce winds
Level short-rooted trees.

Whoso abides, looking for joy, controlled,
Temperate, faithful, strong, shunning all ill,
Mara shall no more overthrow that man
Than the wind doth a hill.

Whoso Kashya wears – the yellow robe –
Being anishkashya* - not sin-free,
Nor heeding truth and governance – unfit
To wear that dress is he.

But whoso, being nishkashya, pure,
Clean from offence, doth still in virtues dwell,
Regarding temperance and truth – that man
Weareth Kashya well.

Whoso imagines truth in the untrue,
And in the true finds untruth – he expires
Never attaining knowledge: life is waste;
He follows vain desires.

Whoso discerns in truth the true, and sees
The false in falseness with unblinded eye,
He shall attain to knowledge; life with such
Aims well before it die.

As rain breaks through an ill-thatched roof, so break
Passions through minds that holy thought despise;
As rain runs from a perfect thatch, so run
Passions from off the wise.

The evildoer mourneth in this world,Z
And mourneth in the world to come; in both
He grieveth. When he sees fruit of his deeds
To see he will be loath.

The righteous man rejoiceth in this world
And in the world to come; in both he takes
Pleasure. When he shall see fruit of his works
The good sight gladness makes.

Glad is he living, glad in dying, glad
Having once died; glad always, glad to know
What good deeds he hath done, glad to foresee
More good where he shall go.

*There is a play here upon the words Kashya, the yellow robe of the
Buddhist priest, and kashya, impurity.

The lawless man, who, not obeying Law,
Leaf after leaf recites, and line by line,
No Buddhist is he, but a foolish herd
Who counts another's kine.

The law-obeying, loving one, who knows
Only one verse of Dharma, but hath ceased
From envy, hatred, malice, foolishness –
He is the Buddhist Priest.

- Sir Edwin Arnold

(Extracted from The Buddhist, Vol. I, No. 30, July 12, 1889)



MODERN

CHAPTER 5. THE UNSEEN WORLD

Theosophical teaching on the subject of the unseen world is much more precise and definite than that which we usually receive from current religious doctrine in England and America. We hold that there is an unseen world, that it is around us here and now, and not far away from us, and that it remains unseen only because most of us have not yet developed the senses by which it can be perceived; that for those who have developed these senses the world is not unseen and not unknown, but is entirely within reach, and can be explored and investigated as may be desired, precisely as any country here on earth might be. Vast parts of the world's surface remained unknown for hundreds, even thousands of years, until explorers were found who took the trouble and had the necessary qualifications to investigate them. Even now there remain parts of our world's surface of which little is known. The North Pole lies still beyond the reach of man, though it may not be long before even that also is conquered.

These unseen worlds have not remained unknown to all, any more than many of the remote places of the earth have really remained unknown from the beginning of time until now. There are vast tracts of primeval forest still standing in, for example, South America, untouched by any recent exploration, untrodden by the foot of man for perhaps thousands of years; but long before that there were great races to whom all that country was not unknown or untrodden, but, on the contrary, to whom it was perfectly familiar, for whom it was a native land. In the same way this "unseen world" is unknown only to use here and now; it was not unknown to the great races of old, not unseen by those among them who were more highly developed, the seers and the prophets and the teachers. There is a great deal of information about this unseen world among the sacred writings of the various religions, and in many cases exactly what has been taught by Theosophy is to be found in the ancient faiths.

It is only here and now, and especially among the followers of the religion which is predominant in Western countries, that any uncertainty seems to have arisen with regard to this unseen world. The consequence of all the vague thought and speech about it is that the world itself is supposed to

be vague and dim and uncertain also. People feel that because they individually know nothing for certain with regard to it, there is therefore nothing certainly to be known, and the whole affair is misty, distant, and unreal. Let me endeavour to put before you the Theosophical teaching on this subject, and to show you that we have every reason for accepting that teaching and understanding that this higher world, though at present unseen to many, is by no means unreal, but is in every way as actual as this which we can all touch and see and hear.

The first idea to be grasped is that this unseen world is merely a continuation of what is known, and that the senses (latent in all of us, though developed only in few) by which it may be cognized are in the first place an extension of the senses which we all possess. That may, perhaps, help us to understand the reality of this unseen world, and to see that there is no difficulty in our way in accepting it. Unfortunately all that most people know about it – or think they know – has been given to them by the religions, and the religions have contrived to be so unscientific in their presentment of it that they have cast doubt and thrown discredit upon the whole affair in the minds of thinking men; so that those among the orthodox who most thoroughly believe in the unseen world now, who feel most certain that they know exactly what that world contains, and what will be the fate of man after death, are usually precisely the most ignorant people of all. Now that should not be so. It should not be for the ignorant, the bigoted, to feel certain about these matters. On the contrary, the most highly intelligent and most scientifically trained men ought to be best able to grasp the evidence for the existence of this unseen world, ought to be the foremost in upholding it as a truth.

Let me first say something about the senses by which this unseen world is perceived, and about the constitution of the world itself, because those two subjects are closely connected, and we cannot examine one without also looking into the other.

States of Matter

It is obvious that we may have matter in different conditions, and that it may be made to change its condition by variations of pressure and of temperature. We have known here three well-known states of matter, the solid, liquid, and gaseous, and it is the theory of scientists that all substances can, under proper variations of temperature and pressure,

exist in all these conditions. There are still, I think, a few substances which chemists have not succeeded in reducing from one state to another; but the theory universally held is that it is after all only a question of temperature one way or the other; that just as what is ordinarily water may become ice at a lower temperature, and may become steam at a higher one, so every solid which we know might become liquid or might become gaseous, given proper conditions; every liquid may be made solid or gaseous, every gas might be liquefied and even solidified. We know that air itself has been liquefied, and that some of the other gases have been reduced to form even a solid slab.

Since that is so, it is supposed that all substances can in this way be changed from one condition to another, either by pressure or heat. Occult chemistry shows us another and higher condition than the gaseous – a condition that we call the etheric – into which all substances known to us can be translated or transmuted; so that any element (such as hydrogen, for example) may exist in etheric condition as well as gaseous; we may have gold or silver or any other element either as a solid, a liquid, or a gas under sufficient heat, and we may carry the experiment further and reduce them to these other higher states, to this condition of matter which we call etheric. We are able to do so because that which science postulates as ether is found by occult chemistry to be not a homogeneous body, but simply another state of matter – not itself a new kind of substance, but any kind of matter reduced to a particular state. Just as we have here around us elements which are normally solid but can be changed into the liquid or the gaseous condition, such as iron or lead, others which are normally liquid, such as mercury, and still others which are normally gaseous, such as nitrogen, so we have a large number of elements or substances which are normally etheric – which are ordinarily in that condition, but by special treatment can be brought to a gaseous condition.

There is nothing at all impossible or unreasonable about that; even a sceptic may see that it might easily be so, and that there is nothing in science to contradict it. Indeed, ether is a necessary hypothesis; it is only the idea that it is a state of matter instead of a substance that is in any way new in what I am suggesting. In ordinary science they speak constantly of an atom of oxygen, an atom of hydrogen, an atom of any of the seventy or eighty substances which chemists call elements, the theory being that that is an element which cannot be further reduced; that each

of these elements has its atom – and an atom, as we may see from its Greek derivation, means that which cannot be cut or further subdivided. Occult science tells us what many scientists have frequently suspected, that all of these so-called elements are not in the true sense of the word elements at all; that is to say, that they can be further subdivided; that what is commonly called an atom of oxygen or hydrogen is not an ultimate something, and therefore in fact not an atom at all, but a molecule which can under certain circumstances be broken up into atoms.

The Ultimate Atoms

By carrying on this breaking-up process it is found that we arrive eventually at an infinite number of definite physical atoms which are all alike; there is one substance at the back of all substance, and it is only the different combinations of the ultimate atoms which give us what in chemistry are called atoms of oxygen, hydrogen, gold or silver, platinum, etc. When they are so broken up we get back to a series of atoms which are all identical, except that some are positive and some are negative, or as we might say, some male and some female.

If we can realize that this is so – and remember, it is not only taught by occult science but it is strongly suspected by many scientific men – there is as yet no direct stumbling-block before us. If that be so, we see at once all sorts of new possibilities in chemistry. If it be true that all substances have the same basis and that it is only a question of raising them to a sufficient temperature or getting them into a particular state to prove this, then we see that a change is a possibility; that we might break up an element and then in reuniting we might join the particles differently, so that actually we might change one of our elements into another, leaving out perhaps in some combinations certain things, and including some that were not there before. Undoubtedly we might make such changes as this, and so we see that we are within reasonable distance of showing the possibility of the transmutation theory of the alchemists, who stated that they made lead or copper or other metals into gold or silver. The thing is not necessarily an impossibility if this theory be true, for by reducing the lead or copper to ultimate atoms, and then may be changed into different metals altogether. The idea becomes feasible if we adopt this suggestion, which has been advanced as a theory by scientists, but is stated by occult chemistry to be a definite fact. [*Since this lecture was delivered its

suggestions have been very largely confirmed by later scientific discoveries. So far at least as the production of radium is concerned, transmutation is now recognized, and obviously if it can occur in the case of one element it can occur with others also, and all that remains is to find the exact process, since the principle is established. That all substances are but modifications of one substance is now generally admitted, and what for the moment is supposed to be the ultimate atom is just now called the electron. It seems likely, that the electron is not what we in Theosophy have called the physical atom, but more probably the astral atom; though it is difficult to speak with certainty until science has defined its discovery a little more closely.]

We eventually get back, then, to the ultimate physical atom, and we find that it is an atom as far as the physical plane is concerned. We cannot break it up any further and still retain the matter in physical condition; nevertheless, it can be broken up, only when that is done the matter belongs to a different realm altogether, to part of this unseen world of which I am going to speak. It can no longer be called physical because it has ceased to obey some of the laws which all physical matter does obey. It is no longer apparently contractible by any cold or expandable by any heat of which we know anything, though there is some evidence to show that it can be affected by solar temperatures. It no longer seems to obey the ordinary laws of gravity, although it has what I suppose we may call a kind of law of gravity of its own.

It is very difficult to put the conception of the finer matter of this higher realm clearly into words upon the physical plane; in fact, I might say it is impossible to put it fully; but this much at least must be emphasized, that the planes above this physical follow naturally from it and fit in with it, and are not abruptly divided and entirely different. Indeed, we have only to suppose a finer subdivision of matter than that with which we are familiar, and a much higher rate of vibration than any which we know, and we shall realize one aspect of the conditions of the astral plane, though there are many other aspects which are not so readily comprehensible.

Planes of Subtler Matter

We find that above and beyond this physical atom we have another series of states of that finer kind of matter, which corresponds fairly to the

degrees of matter down here, solid, liquid, gaseous, and etheric. Again, by pushing up the division far enough we have another atom, the atom of that astral world; and then the process may be repeated. By further subdivision of that astral atom we find ourselves in another still higher and still more refined world, still composed of matter, but of matter so much subtler that nothing that we predicate of matter down here would be true of that except its capability of being subdivided into molecules and atoms. We see that the idea gears on to this plane, that we are not suddenly obliged to leap from the physical which we know – or think we know – into some spiritual region of which we can form no reasonable or distinct conception. It is true that these other realms are unseen, but they are not therefore at all incomprehensible when we approach the subject in this manner.

All students are aware that a great part of even this physical world is not appreciable by our senses; that the whole of the etheric part of the world is to us as though it were not, except for the fact that it carries vibrations for us. We never see the ether which carries the vibration of light to our eyes, though we may demonstrate its necessity as a hypothesis to explain what we find. Just in the same way vibrations are received from the other and higher matter. Although the ether cannot be seen, yet its effects are constantly known and felt by us; and just in the same way, although the astral matter and the mental matter are not visible to ordinary sight, yet the vibrations of that matter affect man, and he is conscious of them in a large number of ways; indeed, some of them he habitually uses, as we shall see when we come to consider the subject of telepathy in a later lecture.

It is important that those who approach the investigation of Theosophical teaching should understand this idea of the various planes or degrees of matter in Nature, making in one sense each a world in itself, though in a higher sense they are all parts of one great whole. If people can be induced to examine this, they will see that we are in no way claiming their faith in a miracle, but rather their investigation of a system, which we offer to them simply as a hypothesis for their study, though to us it is not a hypothesis, but an ascertained fact.

Where are these worlds? They are here round about us all the time, though unseen. We need only open the senses which correspond to them in order to be conscious of them, because each of them is full of life,

exactly as is this physical world that we know. Just as earth and air and water are always found to be full of various forms of life, so is the astral world, so is the mental world – each full of its own kind of life; and among the inhabitants of these two stages of the unknown world are the vast hosts of those whom we call the dead.

The Higher Senses

How does man become cognizant of this? As I said, by the development of the senses corresponding to them. That implies – and it is true – that man has within himself matter of all these finer degrees; that man has not only a physical body, but that he has also within him that higher etheric type of physical matter, and astral matter, and mental matter, the vibration of which is his thought. That is not an unreasonable thing, and if a man is prepared to accept that as a hypothesis, he will also see that a vibration of matter of one of these finer planes can communicate itself to the corresponding matter in the man and can reach the ego within him through that vehicle, just as vibrations of physical matter are conveyed to the senses of the man through his physical organism on this plane. The whole thing is precisely analogous.

Perhaps the easiest way to get some idea of these higher senses will be to begin by considering the senses that we have now. All sensation which reaches us from without is a matter of vibration. Heat, for example, and light, what are these but rates of vibration? There seem to be infinite numbers of possible rates of vibration; there is no limit that we can set, either above or below, to the possibilities of variance among these different rates. Now out of all this infinite series only a small number can reach us here on the physical plane. It is only a small set of vibrations of exceeding rapidity which appear to our eyes and are recognized by us as light. Anything which we see, we see only because it either emits or reflects some out of this small set of vibrations.

The Gamut of Vibrations

We know in many ways that there are other vibrations beyond those that we see. For example, we know it by photography. If we take a BI-sulphide of carbon prism and let a ray of sunlight pass through it, we shall get a beautiful coloured spectrum cast upon a sheet of paper or a piece of linen or anything white that we may use. It is a beautiful spectrum, but only a

small one. If, instead of putting there the white sheet of paper which reflects to us what we see, we put a highly sensitive photographic plate (taking care, of course, to exclude all other light except that which comes through the prism), we shall have a spectrum reproduced which contains a good deal more than we previously saw. It is considerably extended at the violet end, because the plate is capable of being impressed by ultraviolet rays which do not affect the eye. Our eyes are absolutely blind to this extension of the spectrum, but nevertheless it is there, and it is utilized in various branches of scientific research.

An interesting example of this is seen in the photographs of the sun taken by Professor Hale and others. One of the most abundant elements in the sun is calcium, but the rays from the calcium in the sun are invisible to us, though they appear in the ultraviolet part of the spectrum, and therefore produce an impression upon the photographic plate. Sir Robert Ball writes:-

“Views of the sun by this invisible light are utterly unlike the pictures of the sun by ordinary photographs. In ordinary photographs, the brilliant clouds forming the photosphere are represented; these consist of masses of carbon vapours, or rather masses of particles of solid carbon heated to dazzling incandescence. Floating above this region are the mighty calcium vapours. Their subdued light cannot be photographed in the glare of the photosphere, but when all that glare has been filtered away we obtain pictures of what is indeed a new sun, or rather of the wonderful developments of rolling volumes of calcium vapours of whose existence we must without this device have remained in ignorance. In some cases Professor Hale has given us striking duplicate pictures of the same part of the sun, but taken with two different lights. These pictures show large differences in detail, arising from the circumstance that the parts of the sun which give out one kind of light are often not the same as those which give out another kind. Such pictures reveal the structure of the sun as it has never been revealed before.” The description of a scientific experiment such as this is of great interest to the occult student, because it exactly illustrates what he so well knows – that the same object seen simultaneously by two observers may not present at all the same appearance to them. The two photographs of the sun, one taken by the ultraviolet calcium light and the other in the ordinary way, produce very different results, yet each is perfectly accurate, and all that is shown in each is really there. In the same way, if two men simultaneously look at a

friend, one using clairvoyant sight and the other ordinary physical vision, they will see their friend very differently, and yet each will be right as far as his vision extends. The clairvoyant faculty, like the ultra-violet light, will reveal much that can never be seen without it, and for exactly the same reason – because it brings within our ken vibrations which otherwise remain out of our reach.

If we come down to the other end of this great gamut, to the slow vibrations, we shall find a certain number so slow as to affect the heavy matter of the atmosphere, to strike upon the tympanum of our ear and reach us as sound. There may be, and there must be, an infinity of sounds which are too high or too low for the human ear to respond to them; and to all such sounds, of which there must be millions and millions, the human ear is absolutely deaf. If there be vibrations so slow that they appear to us as sound, and other exceedingly rapid ones which appear to us as light, what are all the others? Assuredly there are vibrations of all intermediate rates. We have them as electrical phenomena of various kinds; we have them as the Rontgen rays. In fact, the whole secret of the Rontgen rays, or X-rays, is simply the bringing within the capacity of our eyes and within the field of our vision a few more rays, a few of the finer rates of vibration, which normally would be out of our reach.

I will append here a table of the vibrations at present recognised by scientific men. It is that issued by the Polytechnic School in Paris.

TABLE OF VIBRATIONS

Whose effects are recognized and Studied.

Number of vibrations per second.

1 st	Octave.....	2
2 nd	“	4
3 rd	“	8
4 th	“	16 Sound.
5 th	“	32 “

6 th	"..... 64 "
7 th	"..... 128 "
8 th	"..... 256 "
9 th	".....512 "
10 th	"..... 1,024 "
15 th	"..... 32,768 "
20 th	"..... 1,047,576 Unknown.
25 th	"..... 33,554,432 Electricity.
30 th	"..... ..1,073,741,824 "
35 th	"..... 34,359,738,368 "
40 th	"..... 1,099,511,627,776 Unknown.
45 th	"..... 35,184,372,088,832 "
46 th	"..... 70,368,744,177,644 Heat.
47 th	".....140,737,468,355,328 "
48 th	".....281,474,979,710,656 "
49 th	".....562,949,953,421,312 Light.
50 th	"..... 1,125,899,906,842,624 Chemical Rays.
51 st	"..... 2,251,799,813,685,248 Unknown
57 th	".....144,115,188,075,855,872 "
58 th	".....288,230,376,151,711,744 X-Rays

59th “.....576,460,752,303,423,488 “

60th “.....1,152,921,504,606,846,976 “

61st “.....2,305,843,009,213,693,952 “

62nd “..... 4,611,686,618,427,389,904 Unknown

Extension of Faculty

Many people suppose that our faculties are limited – that they have their definite bounds, beyond which we cannot go. But this is not so. Now and then we find an abnormal person who has the X-ray sight by nature and is able to see far more than others; but we can observe variations for ourselves without going as far as that. If we take a spectroscope, which is an arrangement of a series of prisms, its spectrum, instead of being an inch or an inch and a half long; will extend several feet, although it will be much fainter. If we throw that upon a huge sheet of white paper, and get a number of our friends to mark on that sheet of paper exactly how far they can see light, how far the red extends at one end, or how far the violet extends at the other, we shall be surprised to find that some of our friends can see further at one end, and some further at the other. We may come upon some one who can see a great deal further than most people at both ends of the spectrum; and if so, we have found some one who is on the way to becoming clairvoyant.

It might be supposed that it is only a question of keenness of sight, but it is not that in the least; it is a question of sight which is able to respond to different series of vibrations, and of two people the keenness of whose sight is absolutely equal, we may find that one can exercise it only toward the violet end, and the other toward the red end. The whole phenomenon of colour-blindness hinges on this capacity; but when we find a person who can see a great deal further at both ends of this spectrum, we have some one who is partially clairvoyant, who can respond to more vibrations; and that is the secret of seeing so much more. There may be and there are many entities many objects about us which do not reflect rays of light that we can see, but do reflect these other rays of rates of vibration which we do not see; consequently some of such things can be photographed, though our eyes cannot see them. What are called “spirit photographs” have often been taken, although there is a great deal of

scepticism in connection with them, because, as is well known to any photographer, such a thing can easily be produced by a slight preliminary exposure. There are various ways in which it can be done; nevertheless, although they can be counterfeited by fraud, it is certain that some such photographs have been taken.

Dr. Baraduc's Experiments

The recent experiments of Dr. Baraduc, of Paris, seem to show conclusively the possibility of photographing these invisible vibrations. When last I was there he showed me a large series of photographs in which he had succeeded in reproducing the effects of emotion and of thought. He has one of a little girl mourning over the death of a pet bird, where a curious sort of network of lines produced by the emotion surrounds both the bird and the child. Another of two children, taken the moment after they were suddenly startled, shows a speckled and palpitating cloud. Anger at an insult is manifested by a number of little thought-forms thrown off in a shape of flecks or incomplete globules. A lady who has seen the collection since I did describes "a photograph demonstrating the purr of a cat, whose sonorous contentment projected a delicately-tinted cloud."

The doctor employs the dry-plate system without contact and with or without a camera, in total obscurity through black paper or in a darkroom. The plate is held near the forehead, the heart, or the hand of the person who is experimenting. He says, "Vital force is eminently plastic and, like clay, received impressions as lifelike as if modelled by the invisible hand of some spirit sculptor. These phantom photographs, these telepathic images of the invisible, are produced by concentration of thought; thus, an officer fixed his mind upon an eagle and the majestic form of the bird was depicted upon the plate. Another shows the silhouette of a horse." He tells us that sometimes faces appear upon the plates, and especially describes one case in which a mother's thought produces a portrait of a dead child. He gives us also the following interesting account of an impression made during an astral visit:

"An astonishing feat of telepathic photography is related by a medical practitioner of Bucharest, Dr. Hasdeu. Being interested in telepathic phenomena, he and his friend, Dr. Istrati, determined to put it to a photographic test, so as to prove whether it were possible to project an

image at a distance upon a plate already prepared. The evening agreed on for the crucial experiment arrived. Dr. Hasdeu before retiring placed his camera beside his bed. Dr. Istrati was separated from him by several hundred miles. The latter according to agreement was, just before going to sleep, to concentrate his thoughts in the endeavour to impress his image upon the plate prepared by his friend in Bucharest. The next morning, on awakening, Dr. Istrati was convinced that he had succeeded, being assured of it in a dream. He wrote to a mutual friend, who went to Dr. Hasdeu's residence and who found that gentleman engaged in the development of the plate in question. Upon it there appeared three distinct figures, one of them particularly clear and lifelike. It depicted Dr. Istrati gazing with intensity into the camera, the extremity of the instrument being illuminated by a phosphorescent glow which appeared to emanate from the apparition. When Dr. Istrati returned to Bucharest he was surprised at the resemblance of his fluidic portrait, which revealed his type of face and most marked characteristics with more fidelity than photographs taken by ordinary processes."

Our Wider Powers

All these experiments show us how much is visible to the eye of the camera which is invisible to ordinary human vision; and it is therefore obvious that if the human vision can be made as sensitive as the plates used in photography we shall see many things to which now we are blind. It is within the power of man not only to equal the highest sensitiveness attainable by chemicals, but greatly to transcend it; and by this means a vast amount of information about this unseen world may be gained.

With regard to hearing, the same thing is true. We do not all hear equally, and again I do not mean by that that some of us have better hearing than others, but that some of us hear sounds which the others could under no circumstances hear, however loud they might become. This, again, is demonstrable. There are various vibratory sounds caused by machinery which may be carried to such a height as to become inaudible; as the machinery moves faster and faster they gradually become less and less audible, and at last pass beyond the stage of audibility, not because they have ceased, but because the note has been raised too far for the human ear to follow it. The pleasantest test I know of – which anyone can apply in the summer months if he is living in the country – is the sound of the squeak of the bat. That is a very razor edge of sound, a tiny, needle-like

cry like the squeak of a mouse, only several octaves higher. It is on the edge of the possibility of human hearing. Some people can hear it and others cannot, which shows us again that there is no definite limit, and that the human ear varies considerably in its power of responding to vibrations.

If, then, we are capable of responding only to certain small groups out of the vast mass of vibrations, we may readily see what an enormous change would be produced if we were able to respond to all. The etheric sight of which we sometimes speak is simply an added power of responding to physical vibrations, and much of the clairvoyance on a small scale which is shown by dead people at séances is of that type. They read some passage out of a closed book, or a letter which is shut up within a box. The X-rays enable us to do something similar – not to read a letter, perhaps, but to see through material objects, to descry a key inside a wooden box, or to observe the bones of the human body through the flesh. All such additional sight is obtained in the way I have described, by being able to respond to a larger set of vibrations.

Let us carry that a little further; let us go beyond the vibrations of physical matter and imagine ourselves able to respond to the vibrations of physical matter and imagine ourselves able to respond to the vibrations of astral matter; at once another world is ours for the winning, and we see the objects of a plane material still, but on a higher level. In this, although there may be much which is unfamiliar, there is nothing which is impossible. It all leads on stage by stage from the faculties which we already know and use, and this world of astral matter follows step by step from the world with which we are so familiar. There is nothing irrational about the conception. The claim made by Theosophy, and by all those belonging to the great religions of the East, that it is possible for man to sense this unknown world and tell us all about it, is in reality a perfectly reasonable one, instead of being a grotesque and absurd suggestion savouring only of charlatanism or fraud, as is so often supposed. The whole theory is in fact scientific and coherent and may be approached along a purely scientific line of investigation.

The Truth About the Unseen

Broadly, in order that the scheme in outline at any rate may be before you, no (not quite accurately, but in a general way) to the orthodox idea of

hell and heaven; or they are rather heaven and purgatory; because although it is true that terrible suffering may come to mankind under certain conditions in the lower part of that astral plane, yet all suffering of any sort that comes to him is not of a punitive but of a purgative nature. Suffering is always and under all circumstances intended to benefit the man. It is part of the scheme which has for its object the evolution of the man; not an endless, meaningless punishment given through revenge, but the steady working out of a great law of justice, a law which gives to every man exactly that which he has deserved, not as reward or punishment, but simply as a scientific result. If a man puts his hand into the fire and it is burn, it does not occur to him to say that somebody punished him for doing that; he knows that it is the natural result; it is a question of the rapidity with which the vibrations from the burning matter have pierced his skin, and have produced the various disintegrations which have taken place. Just in the same way the suffering which follows evil is not a punishment imposed from

When by the use of such faculties man is able to examine this unseen world, what does he find with regard it? Broadly, in order that scheme outline at any rate may be before you, let me say we world divided into two stages, astral and mental, these correspond (not quite accurately, but a general way) orthodox idea hell heaven; or they are rather heaven purgatory; because although it true terrible suffering come mankind under certain conditions lower part plane, yet all sort comes him not punitive purgative nature. Always circumstances intended benefit man. Which has for its object evolution man; an endless, meaningless punishment given through revenge, steady working out great law justice, gives every exactly deserved, as reward punishment, simply scientific result. If puts his hand fire burnt, occur somebody punished doing that; knows natural result; question rapidity vibrations from burning matter have pierced skin, produced various disintegration taken place. Just same way follows evil imposed from outside, but merely the result under an unvarying law of what the man himself has done; and so all the suffering that comes to him comes under the great law and is intended to purify and help him, and will undoubtedly produce that effect.

The lower astral world, therefore, corresponds very much more to purgatory than to the ordinary and most blasphemous idea of hell. There is nothing in the whole universe, happily, which in the least corresponds to that. Although there is no endless torture such as has been pictured for

us by the diseased mind and disordered imagination of the mediaeval monk, there are individual cases of suffering; but even that suffering, terrible though it may sometimes be, is the best thing for the man, because only in that way can he get rid of the desire which has come upon him, the evil which he has allowed to grow within him; only by that means can he cast this off, so as to begin anew in the next birth under better conditions his effort toward the higher evolution.

The Heaven Life

The second part of life after death, the heaven world, is also the result of the man's actions, but of the higher and nobler part of them. There all the spiritual force which he has set in motion during his world-life finds its full result. Here again it is merely a scientific question of the amount of energy invested, for the law of the conservation of energy holds good in all these loftier planes, just as it does on the physical. A man's intensity of feeling for some high ideal, the intensity of the unselfish affection which he pours out, whether it be in devotion upon his deity, or merely in love upon those around him – whether it be an exalted type of impersonal love which includes all, or the more ordinary variety which fully lavishes itself only upon one or two – all these are spiritual forces at their different stages of their different degrees, and all represent energy generated, which can never bear its full result in this physical life, because all our highest thoughts and aspirations belong to the realm of the untrammelled soul, and so this lower plane is incapable of providing a field for their fulfilment or realization. None knows it better than the artist or the poet who tries to realize them – the man who paints a picture or writes a poem, hoping thereby to convey to others what he has seen in a vision of that higher world; none knows better than such an artist how utterly the expression of that thought fails, how the best that he can do, the most satisfactory reproduction that he makes, falls infinitely short of the reality.

All that being so, all these higher ideals and aspirations remain a vast force stored up, which can never be exhausted on the physical plane or during physical life. It is only after death and the lower passions and desires are dissipated that it is possible for all these grander forces to work themselves out. And so there comes to be a higher unseen world of transcendent beauty and unimaginable splendour which has been called heaven. Attempts have been made to picture it by all religions, but they have all fallen miserably short of the truth. We have passages imaging

heaven as containing gates of pearl and streets of gold and seas of fire mingled with glass, and trees which bear twelve manner of fruits, and jewellery and precious stones of various sorts, all clumsy endeavours presenting the highest and best that the imagination of the writer could attain. We shall find similar symbology in the Hindu and Buddhist manuscripts, the same trees of gold and silver with fruits of precious stones in the gardens of the gods, - crude yet genuine endeavours of the early writers to image something that they had seen, something too glorious for words to express.

We, in our day, draw a different picture of the heaven-world. It is something far more refined, more intellectual for those who understand what spirituality means; but still our efforts, although to us they are so much more satisfactory, equally fall short of the reality of the grand truth behind. So it remains true as it was written long ago: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But there is a happy difference; it is not only for a faithful few, but for all; for surely all must love Him as far as they know Him. There is no limitation; this heaven-world is heaven for all who can reach it.

Each has his Reward

Instead of consigning some men to heaven and some to hell, as modern theology does, it would be more true to say that every man must pass through both the states which are typified by those names. Every man must pass through the astral plane on his way to the heaven-world. Every man at the end of his astral life will attain that heaven-world, unless he be a person so elementary, so degraded as never yet to have had any unselfish thought or feeling. If that be so, there can indeed be no heaven-world for him, because all these selfish desires and feelings belong exclusively to the astral plane, and they will find their result on that plane. There are those who have scarcely anything which is unselfish in their nature; such people also will reap the reward of whatever good they have done, not in that heaven-world, but at a lower level, in the higher part of the astral plane.

As was said long ago about those who prayed in public places in order that they might be seen of men: "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." As it is with those of high ideals, who do not get all that they

desire here, so it is with those whose ideals are selfish; they have their reward also after death; in the higher part of the astral world they will gain their result; they will find themselves surrounded by that which they desire; but they will miss the higher things which they have not desired, because as yet they have not evolved to that level. Still, all will be happy in their own way and at their own time. The selfish will doubtless suffer much on the way to that stage, but there will be something even for them – something for all. It will be seen that this is a less confined idea than that of the orthodox religions. We go somewhat further than they, and we are enabled to do so because the whole scheme is scientific, because there is no question of a favouritism that consigns some people to heaven and shuts others out of it.

All this is no surmise; it is the simple truth – truth based upon careful observation, and capable of being verified by those who have eyes to see upon the higher planes. Nor is this heaven-world a mere land of dreams; it is full of the most vivid reality. Indeed, it is the plane of the Divine mind, which responds to whatever call is made upon it. If one man has a wealth of the grandest aspirations, he draws down a corresponding outpouring from above; if another has only just a little grain or two of anything unselfish within his nature, even that little grain still brings forth its appropriate result. There is no question of one entering and the other being shut out, but each gains just what he is capable of gaining. This is the essence of the heaven-world. Every man there is happy; necessarily all are not equally happy, nor all happy in the same way, but every individual is happy to the fullest extent of his capacity for happiness. The only thing which prevents him from going further is that he is unable to grasp any more. Each vessel is filled to the utmost; though some vessels are small and some are large, they are filled to their respective capacities.

We must, I think, admit that this is a far more reasonable theory than that held by modern theology. My intention today has been not so much to give you details as to the conditions of the worlds beyond the grave, as to show you they are all part of the same world; to show you that there is no sudden break of any kind, but that everything is reasonable, coherent and graded all the way through. As to their place, I have told you that these worlds are about us here. But, you will say, how can that be? How is it possible, the space around us being filled with matter, that other matter, however fine, can exist?

Interpenetration

I do not think it will be difficult for us to realize how this may be. It is a well-known scientific fact, that even in the hardest substances on earth no two atoms ever touch one another; always every atom has its field of action and vibration; every molecule has its field of vibration, however small; consequently there is also space between them, under any possible circumstances. Every physical atom is floating in an astral sea, a sea of astral matter surrounding it, interpenetrating every interstice of this physical matter. These same laws explain another phenomenon of which you have heard – the passage of matter through matter at spiritualistic séances. Matter either in the physical etheric condition or in the astral condition can pass with ease through dense physical matter exactly as though it were not there, by reason of this interpenetration, so that the whole thing which seemed so difficult becomes quite simple to a man who can grasp that idea.

One more word of caution with regard to this unseen world. Do not imagine that these various stages or divisions of matter are lying above one another like the shelves of a bookcase. Realize that interpenetration is perfect, within and around every physical object. It is already known that ether interpenetrates all physical substances. I should like, if I could, to make clear to you how natural all this is and to guard you against the error which comes from supposing that everything beyond the physical is not natural but supernatural. It is not so at all. It is superphysical if you will, but not supernatural. The whole scheme is one scheme, and the same laws run through it all. It is true that there is a certain further extension of these planes. In dealing with this physical earth, we have first a ball of solid matter, which is surrounded by water to a great extent. Above that we find the air, because it is surrounded by this atmosphere; but these three conditions of matter alike are interpenetrated by astral matter, only there is this difference, that the astral matter being so much lighter rises further from the surface of the earth than the atmosphere does. If it were possible for anyone to penetrate beyond the atmosphere of our earth, he might still for a time be within the astral plane, because the astral plane extends further than does the physical atmosphere; so in that sense it is true that the astral plane rises higher. Not that it does not exist here and now, but its extension is greater, and consequently it makes a larger sphere than the earth.

The same thing is true of the mental plane; there we have still finer matter; it is interpenetrating all the astral and physical matter round about, and also extending further from the world than does the astral plane. The mental plane of our earth is a definite globe, much larger than the physical planet which it surrounds, but still separated by millions of miles from the mental plane of any other planet. On the other hand, when we pass beyond the mental plane and reach the buddhic, there is no division there, for that plane is common to all the planets of our chain. The same is true, probably, to a still greater and wider extent of other and higher realms, but of those we need not speak at present. They are beyond the scope of this lecture. Those who wish to understand the planes of nature, who wish to get some idea of the wonder and the beauty of these higher worlds, may obtain their desire by examining the Theosophical literature. I should recommend them to study the book which I have written about *The Other Side of Death*, and also two of our Theosophical Manuals, the fifth and sixth, *The Astral Plane* and *The Devachanic Plane*. If they read these books carefully, they will grasp all we at present know of these unseen worlds, and I can assure them that they will also find, as the rest of us have found, that the whole of this scheme is so logical, so coherent and easy to grasp, that there will be nothing repellent about it, that no mental gymnastics will be required, no perilous leaps over weak spots where the ground of reason is not firm, but a steadily graded ascent from one stage to another; for we do no violence to the convictions of any man.

Reason and Common-sense

They will find that this system of teaching which we put before them is full of the same reasonableness in every direction; that it is in fact an apotheosis of common-sense, as is all occultism of which I know anything.

If you find some pretended occultism, so-called, which makes violent demands on your faith, which suggests all sorts of curious, unnatural performances, you have at once strong reason to suspect that occultism, to feel that it is not of the true kind. In every case that can arise man must apply his reason and common-sense. I do not say that there is nothing except reason that can aid you. There is a spiritual certainty which comes from behind, about which it is impossible to reason; but that comes only from previous knowledge. The man who has that definite intuitive

certainty about anything has known the fact beforehand at some time, in another life; as a soul, therefore, he still knows it, and his conviction with regard to it is based upon experience and reason, although the links of the chain of reasoning by which he arrives at that certainty are not within the memory of the physical brain. Such intuitions, however, are rare, and reason must be our guide in all of our beliefs. Assuredly any scheme which asks us to do violence to our reason is one which should be instantly rejected. In Theosophy we specially emphasize the fact that blind faith of any kind is a fetter which holds man back in the spiritual race. He who wishes to advance must throw aside blind faith; he must learn that no particular book is infallible; for our knowledge of truth is progressive, and we are steadily learning more and more with every day that passes over our heads.

Theosophy has no dogma to impose upon his students, no faith once for all delivered to the saints. It has a certain amount of knowledge to offer for their examination; but students should never forget that those upon whom it has devolved to write books and give lectures upon these subjects are themselves also fellow-students who are constantly observing and learning. Those who wish to follow Theosophical thought must read the latest editions of the books, not the earlier, because in the interval between any two editions new facts have been observed. There are members who would prefer to have a definite, perfect creed given to them which they could learn once and for all, so that it would be unnecessary to do any further thinking; but this is a desire which our writers are unable to gratify, for though the Theosophical ideas are in the highest degree religious, they are approached entirely from a scientific standpoint. It is the mission of Theosophy to bring together these two lines of thought, to show there need be no conflict between religion and science, but that on the contrary science is the handmaid of religion, and religion is the highest of all possible objects of scientific examination.

Those who will study the Theosophical teaching will find, as we have found, that year after year it will grow more interesting and more fascinating, giving them more and more satisfaction for their reason as well as more perfect fulfilment and realization of their higher aspirations. Those who examine it will never regret it; through all their future lives they will find reason to be thankful that they undertook the study of the mighty and all-embracing Wisdom-Religion, which in these modern days we call Theosophy.

Note. Since this chapter has been revised for the second edition of this book, additional important facts concerning the structure of the Unseen World have been discovered, and appear in Mrs. Besant's Occult Chemistry, especially in the appendix on "The Aether of Space," by A. Besant and C.W. Leadbeater.



CHAPTER 6. THE RATIONALE OF MESMERISM

This subject of mesmerism must be, I think, one of considerable interest to every one who understands at all what it includes. There is a great deal of misconception as to the signification of the word, so it is well to commence with some sort of definition. In these days we hear little of mesmerism, but much of hypnotism, and the question at once arises, are these two things the same? I believe myself that we may usefully make a distinction between them, though many people use them practically as synonyms. Hypnotism is derived from the Greek word *hupnos*, sleep; so that hypnotism is the study of the art of putting to sleep. The word, however, has rather unfortunate associations, and a history behind it which is far from credible. There is no question that originally the name of mesmerism was applied to all phenomena which are now covered by the other, because Mesmer was, as far as Europe is concerned, the discoverer of the power which has been called after him. He was ridiculed and persecuted by the ignorant and prejudiced scientific men of his time, and the medical profession would have nothing to say to his experiments. They simply denied the facts, just as many people now think it intelligent to deny the facts of spiritualism.

Fifty years later a certain Mr. Braid, a surgeon of Manchester, published a little book approaching these facts from a new standpoint, and stated that they were all due to the fatigue of certain muscles of the eyelid. He called his book *Neurypnology*, and there are still many who suppose him to be the first man to treat these subjects scientifically. This, however, by no means represents the facts, for his hypothesis leaves most of the phenomena unaccounted for; and it seems to have won official acceptance only because it offered a line of retreat from an untenable position. The phenomena which the profession had decided to ridicule and deny were constantly recurring; here was a method by which they could at least partially be admitted without having to make the humiliating confession that Mesmer had after all been right, and orthodox science wrong. So the theory was set up that this was in reality an entirely new discovery, and must be called by a distinct name. Along this line followed Charcot, Binet and Fere, and a number of recent writers – all taking but a partial view of the subject, all ignoring any facts which did not square with this partial view.

Mesmer himself, the real pioneer of this line of discovery, came much nearer to the facts in the opinions which he expressed. He held the existence of a subtle fluid which passes from the operator to the subject, and in this correct assumption he was followed by the earlier French experimenters, the Marquis de Puysegur, Deleuze, Baron du Potet and Baron von Reichenbach.

The Experiments of Reichenbach

The last-mentioned patiently tried and recorded a long series of experiments with sensitives, and his works deserve careful study. His first discovery was that certain young people among his patients could, in a dark room, see flames issuing from the poles of a magnet; then a little later he found that similar flames were seen flowing from the tips of his fingers while he was engaged in making mesmeric passes.

It was because of this similarity that he bestowed upon the fluid which is transferred from the operator to the patient in mesmerism the name of "animal magnetism." He suspected its connection with the vital force poured forth from the sun, and confirmed his idea by an ingenious experiment. He arranged a copper wire so that one end should be exposed to the sunlight out of doors, and the other he led into his dark room. He then found that if the outer end of the wire was kept in the shade, the sensitive in the room saw nothing; but if the wire was exposed to the sunlight, the patient was at once able to point out the end of the wire in the dark room, because a faint light began to issue from it. When a copper plate was attached to the outer end of the wire, so as to collect more of the sun's power, quite a brilliant light was discernible by the sensitive.

Through all his earlier experiments he was under the impression that this magnetic sensitiveness was always a symptom of ill-health, and it seems to have been a great surprise to him when he found that one of his patients retained her power after her recovery. Further investigation led him to understand that its possession was not a question of health but of psychic faculty; and he conjectures, correctly enough, that all in reality have the power to a greater or less degree, but that in some it is only able to come to the surface when the ordinary physical faculties are weakened by sickness. It will at once be seen that these earlier writers were much

nearer to the truth about such matters than many of their successors have been.

Even at the present day there are probably no better records of cases of surgical operations under mesmerism, and of curative mesmerism generally, than those contained in the books of Dr. Esdaile of Calcutta, and of Dr. Elliotson, who was working in North London. At about that period – in 1842, I think it was – considerable attention was attracted by an operation performed at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London by a Mr. Ward, who amputated above the knee the leg of a patient who had been put into the mesmeric trance – as good a case as the most sceptical enquirer could desire. Yet when a report of this case was laid before the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London, they declined to listen to the testimony, on the ground that it was manifestly incredible and absurd, and that even if it were true it would be contrary to the will of Providence, since pain was intended to be part of a surgical operation! It seems impossible that any assemblage of educated and presumably scientific men could be so idiotic, but there is no doubt that this resolution was passed and still stands on record.

Invincible Ignorance

Things have improved since then, but there is still a good deal of foolish incredulity with regard to this subject – and, worse still, a great deal of unfounded assertion on the part of the ignorant, to which it is difficult for the student to listen with patience. On this point Mr. Sinnett, our Vice-President, has well written:- “ No one deserves blame for leaving altogether unstudied any subject that does not attract him. But in most cases people who are conscious of limited intellectual resources entertain a decent respect for others who are better furnished. A man may be nothing but a sportsman himself, and yet refrain from asserting that chemists and electricians must be impostors, and a chemist may know nothing of Italian art, and yet may refrain from declaring that Raphael never existed. But all through the commonplace world people who are ignorant of psychic science encourage one another in the brainless and absurd denial of facts, whenever any of its phenomena come up for treatment. The average country grocer, the average reporter, the average student of physical science, are all steeped in the same dense incapacity to understand the propriety of respecting the knowledge of others, even if they do not share it themselves, whenever they brush up against any

statement relating to the work of those who are engaged in any branch of psychic enquiry. From the occult point of view, indeed, one can understand why this should be so, for the incredulity of unspiritual mankind is Nature's own protection against those unfit as yet to use her higher spiritual gifts."

The book from which that quotation is made is called *The Rationale of Mesmerism*, and it is one which no student of this subject should neglect to read, for it puts the Theosophical theory of the matter much more ably than I can, the author being a practical mesmerist of considerable power and experience. All that I can do is to give you an outline sketch; for the filling in I must refer you to Mr. Sinnett. It is impossible to understand mesmerism unless we take it as part of an orderly scheme of the universe, and explain it in accordance with the facts which are known about the constitution of man, and his relation to the world around him. Taken in that way, it at once becomes comprehensible, and no difficulty is found in classifying and accounting for its various manifestations. We must remember the Theosophical explanation of the different planes of nature and the corresponding bodies possessed by man; for since the fluid poured out in mesmerism is subtle and invisible to ordinary sight, it will obviously affect the subtler part of the body, and consequently it is to our study of that part that we must turn for a rational theory of its effects.

It is well to remember that man is a being living simultaneously in two worlds – the seen and the unseen; existing simultaneously upon several of these planes of nature, and consciously or unconsciously receiving impressions from them all through his life.

When we realize this we are prepared to understand how partial any merely physical view of man must be, and how easily we may miscalculate actions and happenings on this plane, if we are ignorant of their causes on higher levels. Mr. Sinnett, in the book just mentioned, compares our position in that respect to that of a fish which, swimming in the water, tries to understand the motions of the keel of a ship as it moves beside him. He will no doubt be able to comprehend the resistance offered by the water to the keel, its deflection from a straight course by currents, and so on; but there must frequently appear motions of the reason of which he can have no conception, because it belongs to another and higher world. The slope given to the hull of the vessel by the setting of the sails this way or that would be to him a mysterious and unaccountable

movement, and he would probably suppose it to be due to a living will residing in the creature. A flying fish might conceivably learn to understand something of the conditions both of the air and the sea, and so would come nearer to a correct theory; and in this respect the clairvoyant student is like the flying fish – he is able to transcend his element to some extent, and so to enter a wider world, in which he learns many lessons. The thoughts and passions of the man are seen on the physical plane only by their effects, yet they are the motive power, and must be taken into account if we wish to understand, just as our supposititious fish would have to know something about sails before he could know why his ship moved as it did.

We may approach this subject of mesmerism along one of two lines. We may either commence to make practical experiments for ourselves, or we may take up the study of the experiments of others through the books which they have written. To any man who decides for the books, I should recommend Dr. Esdaile's as the best of all to begin with; for his subjects were all Orientals, and they are on the average far more sensitive to mesmeric influence than white men are.

The Nature of Sensitiveness

That does not mean that they are necessarily of weaker will; it is a question of the side of the man which is developed. You may remember how I have explained in previous lectures that the evolution of man is cyclical in its character – that is consists in a descent into matter and then a rising out of it again, bearing the results of the immersion in experience gained and quality developed. There comes in the course of this cycle a lowest point, at which the man is most deeply buried in matter, and consequently least open to any influences from subtler forces, and this point of extreme materiality is often coincident with strong intellectual development. In this way we have a combination of a grossly material nature with a specially materialistic mental attitude; and just at that period the man would certainly not be a good subject mesmerically. I do not say that his resistance might not be overcome by a sufficiently strong will, but it would require more effort than it would be in the least likely to be worth while to make, and so we should call him a bad subject.

Before that there would be a period when the psychic side of him could be more readily reached, and again later in his evolution it would

reappear, though at this second stage it would hardly be possible to control him mesmerically except with his own consent, for this is the truer psychism in which the man possesses his powers in full consciousness, and can use them voluntarily efficiently. But at the intermediate point it is not the amount of intellect which he possesses which saves him from mesmeric influence, as he often proudly thinks, but simply the materialism of his conceptions. It is because he is tied down to the merely physical plane that he resists any effort to impress him in that way from without.

When, however, an impression can be made, the effects are often of the most striking character. Not only may one person subjugate the will of another to almost any conceivable extent, but physical results may be produced such as anaesthesia or rigidity, and many diseases may be readily cured. How is all this to be produced? We must remember that the physical body contains a great deal of matter that is invisible to ordinary sight. Not only has it its solid and liquid constituents, but there is also much that is gaseous, and a great deal that is etheric. This latter constituent plays no small part in the man's well-being, for the whole of his body is permeated by it, so that if it were possible to withdraw from him all the solid, liquid and gaseous particles, the form of his body would still be clearly marked out in etheric matter. This part of his body, which has sometimes been called the etheric double, is the vehicle of vitality in the man.

The Nervous Circulation

We know that besides the system of veins and arteries, we have a system of nerves running all through the body; and just as arteries and veins have their circulation, whose centre is the heart, so have the nerves their circulation, whose centre is the brain. But it is a circulation not of blood but of the life-fluid, and it flows not so much along the nerves themselves as along a sort of coating of ether which surrounds each nerve. Many electricians have thought it probable that electricity does not flow along a wire at all, but along a coating of ether surrounding the wire; and if that be so, the phenomenon is exactly duplicated by this flowing of the vital force.

Normally in the healthy man two types of fluid are connected with this system of nervous circulation. First, there is the nerve-aura, which flows

regularly and steadily round from the brain as a centre; and secondly, there is this vital fluid, which is absorbed from without and carried round by the nerve-aura in the form of rose-coloured particles, which are easily visible to clairvoyant sight. Let us consider the nerve-aura first. It has been observed that upon the presence of this fluid depends the proper working of the nerve – a fact which can be demonstrated by various experiments. We know that it is possible by mesmeric passes to make a person's arm quite insensible to pain; this is done by driving back this nerve-aura, so that over that part of the body the flow is no longer kept up, and consequently the nerve is unable to report to the brain what touches it, as it usually does. Without the specialized ether which normally surrounds it, the nerve is not able to communicate with the brain, and so it is precisely as though the nerve were not there for the time – or in other words, there is no feeling.

The vital fluid is also specialized, and in the healthy man it is present in great abundance. It is poured upon us originally from the sun, which is the source of life in this inner sense as well as, by means of its light and heat, in the outer world. The atoms in the earth's atmosphere are more or less charged with this force at all times, though it is in much greater activity and abundance in brilliant sunshine; and it is only by absorbing it that our physical bodies are able to live. In itself it is naturally invisible, like all other forces; but we see its effect in the intense activity of the atoms energized by it. After it has been absorbed into the human body and thereby specialized, these atoms take on the beautiful rose-colour already described, and are carried in a constant stream over and through the whole body along the nerves. The man in perfect health has plenty of this fluid to spare, and it is constantly radiating from his body in all directions, so that he is in truth shedding strength and vitality on those around him, even though quite unconsciously. On the other hand, a man who from weakness or other causes is unable to specialize for his own use a sufficient amount of the world's life-force, sometimes equally unconsciously acts as a sponge, and absorbs the already specialized vitality of any sensitive person with whom he comes in contact, to his own temporary benefit, no doubt, but often to the serious injury of his victim. Probably most persons have experienced this in a minor degree, and have found that there is some one among their acquaintances after whose visits they always feel an unaccountable weakness and languor.

What the Mesmerist Gives

Now you will begin to see what it is that the mesmerizer pours into his subject. It may be either the nerve-ether or the vitality, or both. Supposing a patient to be seriously weakened or exhausted, so that he has lost power to specialize the life-fluid for himself, the mesmerizer may renew his stock by pouring some of his own upon the quivering nerves, and so produce a rapid recovery. The process is analogous to what is often done in the case of food. When a person reaches a certain stage of weakness the stomach loses the power to digest, and so the body is not properly nourished, and the weakness is thereby increased. The remedy adopted in that case is to present to the stomach food already partially digested by means of pepsin or other similar preparations; this can probably be assimilated, and thus strength is gained. Just so, a man who is unable to specialize for himself may still absorb what has been done already specialized by another, and so gains strength to make an effort to resume the normal action of the etheric organs. In many cases of weakness that is all that is needed.

There are other instances in which congestion of some kind has taken place, the vital fluid has not circulated properly, and the nerve-aura is sluggish and unhealthy. Then the obvious course of proceeding is to replace it by healthy nerve-ether from without; but there are several ways in which this may be done. Some magnetizers simply employ brute force, and steadily pour in resistless floods of their own ether in the hope of washing away that which needs removal. Success may be attained along these lines, though with the expenditure of a good deal more energy than is necessary. A more scientific method is that which goes to work somewhat more quietly, and first withdraws the congested or diseased matter, and then replaces it by healthier nerve-ether thus gradually stimulating the sluggish current into activity. If the man has a headache, for example, there will almost certainly be a congestion of unhealthy ether about some part of his brain, and the first step is to draw that away.

How is this to be managed? Just in the same way as the outpouring of strength is managed – by an exercise of the will. We must not forget that these finer subdivisions of matter are readily moulded or affected by the action of the human will. The mesmerist may make passes, but they are at most nothing but the pointing of his gun in a certain direction, while his will is the powder that moves the ball and produces the result, the fluid being the shot sent out. A mesmerizer who understands his business can manage as well without passes if he wishes; I have known

one who never employed them, but simply looked at his subject. The only use of the hand is to concentrate the fluid, and perhaps to help the imagination of the operator; for to will strongly he must believe, and the action no doubt makes it easier for him to realize what he is doing. Just as a man may pour out magnetism by an effort of will, so may he draw it away by an effort of will, though in this case also he may often use a gesture of the hands to help him. In dealing with the headache, he would probably lay his hands upon the forehead of the patient, and think of them as sponges steadily drawing out the unhealthy magnetism from the brain. That he is actually producing the result of which he thinks, he will probably soon discover; for unless he takes precautions to cast off the bad magnetism which he is absorbing, he will either himself feel the headache or begin to suffer from a pain in the arm and hand with which the operation is being performed. He is actually drawing into himself diseased matter, and it is necessary for his comfort and well-being that he should dispose of it before it obtains a permanent lodgement in his body.

He should therefore adopt some definite plan to get rid of it, and the simplest is just to throw it away, to shake it from the hands as one would shake water. Although he does not see it, the matter which he has withdrawn is physical, and can be dealt with by physical means. It is therefore necessary that he should not neglect these precautions, and that he should not forget to wash his hands carefully after curing a headache or any malady of that nature. Then, after he has removed the cause of the evil, he proceeds to pour in good strong healthy magnetism to take its place and to protect the patient against the return of the disease. One can see that in the case of any nervous affection this method would have manifold advantages. In most of such cases what is wrong is an irregularity of the fluids which course along the nerves; either they are congested, or they are sluggish in their flow, or on the other hand they may be too rapid; they may be deficient in quantity, or poor in quality. Now if we administer drugs of any sort, at the best we can only act upon the physical nerve, and through it to some limited extent upon the fluids surrounding it; whereas mesmerism acts directly upon the fluids themselves, and so goes straight to the root of the evil.

Magnetic Sympathy

In those other cases where trance is produced, or where the rigidity of certain muscles is one of the results, the will of the operator is also

concerned, and force of some sort is always poured in. But the will is somewhat differently directed; instead of thinking of curing, or of withdrawing evil magnetism, the mesmerizer is thinking of dominating the will of the subject, or of replacing the man's nerve-aurea either partially or entirely by his own. When this latter is the case, the subject's nerves no longer report to his brain, but a close sympathy is created between the two persons concerned. This may be made to work in two ways – so that the operator feels instead of the subject, or that the subject feels everything that touches the operator. I have seen instances in which, while the subject was entranced, the operator stood with his hands behind him a few yards away; and if some third person pricked the hand of the operator (hidden behind his back, so that the sensitive could by no possibility see it in the ordinary way) the subject would immediately rub the corresponding hand, as though she had felt the prick instead of the mesmerizer. Presumably his nerve-ether was in connection with her brain instead of her own, and when she received from this aurea the feeling that she would have otherwise associated with a prick in her hand, she supposed it to come from its usual source, and acted accordingly.

This is after all only a phenomenon of precisely the same nature as that which we observe when a man has had his arm removed by an operation; sometimes something will cause irritation to one of the nerves which were originally connected with the fingers, and his brain will refer this sensation to its accustomed cause, and the man will assert that he feels pain in the amputated limb. Another analogous experiment is made in optical study; it is possible to produce a slight electrical discharge inside a person's head, thus affecting the optic nerve at an intermediate point, instead of through the retina of the eye. When this is done, the brain registers the flash as though it had come through the ordinary channel, and it seems to the man that he has seen a flash external to himself. The brain instinctively refers the impression which it receives to the source from which such impressions have always hitherto come. It is as though we should tap a telegraph wire at an intermediate point, and send a message thence; the operator at each end would suppose that the message came from the operator at the other; it would not occur to them that the signals which had always hitherto come from the other station were now caused at an intermediate point.

The Phenomena

We now begin to glimpse the method in which mesmeric phenomena are produced. This nerve-aura or nerve-ether is the intermediary on the one hand between will and physical action, and on the other between the impressions received upon the physical plane and the mind which accepts and analyzes them. So when the mesmerist substitutes his own nerve-aura for that of the subject he can control both the actions and sensations of his patient. The nerves which normally bear messages from the man's own brain now bring them from a different brain; but the muscles, receiving their message through the accustomed channel, obey it unhesitatingly, and so the man can be made to do all kinds of foolish and incongruous actions. On the other hand, since the reception and translation of all impressions from without depends upon this nerve-aura, when it is under foreign control any illusion may be conveyed to the undeveloped and therefore undiscerning ego.

I remember seeing a good instance of that in Burma. Our president-founder, Colonel H.S. Olcott, is a good mesmerist, and I have seen him try many interesting experiments. I recollect that in one case he threw into the mesmeric condition a native servant who could not speak English. The man seemed as usual, and was not in any obvious kind of trance, yet as to impressions he was absolutely under the control of the Colonel's will. Our president asked (in English) what illusion should be produced, and some one suggested that a line of fire should be seen in a certain part of the room. The Colonel made one strong pass in the direction indicated, thereby creating a vigorous thought-form; and then the servant was called up and told to walk around the room. He moved quite naturally until he reached the imaginary line, when he manifested symptoms of great surprise and terror, and cried out that there was a fire in the way, and that he could not pass. In another case the Colonel drew an imaginary line on the ground and willed that the servant should be unable to pass over it – the man of course was not present. The servant was then called by his master, and came briskly as usual; but when he reached the imaginary line he stumbled and almost fell, and as he recovered himself he declared that he must be bewitched, since something held his feet, so that he could not move. And though he made several efforts, he was evidently unable to cross that imaginary line, though he was much puzzled and frightened to find himself in such an incomprehensible dilemma.

I have seen many such instances as that, and I think they at once show us how dangerous this power might become in the hands of an unscrupulous man. This servant appeared normal, and no one could have supposed him to be in any unusual condition, yet he was entirely under delusion; therefore he could easily have been led into foolish or even criminal action under the influence of some other imposed delusion. Experiments have shown that in such cases action may be delayed – that a person may be impressed to do a certain thing, say at three o'clock tomorrow, and then awakened from the mesmeric influence. But at three o'clock tomorrow a sudden uncontrollable impulse will come over him to do that thing, and in the vast majority of cases he will at once proceed to do it. Uncontrollable is perhaps too strong a word, for no impulse is really that; but this thought which will arise within the man is in no way distinguishable from a thought or impulse of his own, and most men do not greatly reason about their impulses, or make much effort to weigh and govern them. If the act ordered were an immoral one, a good and pure subject would be much horrified, and a struggle would arise, which might end in submission to the impulse or victory over it. I am sorry to say that some unscrupulous experiments of that sort have been tried in Paris – experiments which I should consider immoral and unjustifiable. Their results have shown that there are cases in which innate virtue is strong enough to triumph over even the most determined attempt to compel it to violate its conscience; but in the majority of instances the temptation prevailed. You see therefore how necessary it is that every mesmerist should be good and pure-hearted, as he might readily be tempted to misuse so terrible a power.

A Word of Caution

For this reason among others it is not well to dabble in mesmerism or to play with it. All psychic forces are distinctly edged tools for the inexperienced person, and all who take up the investigation of any of them will do well to prepare themselves by an exhaustive study of the results attained by their predecessors, for it is only when armed with knowledge and shielded by purity of intention and selflessness that the neophyte can be certain of safety. All these things – mesmerism, spiritualism, telepathy, et id genus omne should be taken up seriously and scientifically if they are taken up at all. As Mr. Stead remarks with regard to similar studies: "If you cannot or will not examine the subject seriously, you had a thousand times better leave it alone. It is unwise for a boy to go

fooling round a buzz-saw. Anybody with a smattering of chemistry can manufacture dynamite, but the promiscuous experimenting with high explosives is more likely to result in explosion than profit. And if you feel disposed to go in 'for the fun of the thing,' every serious investigator has only one word to say, and that is – don't!"

There is no need, however, for the peaceable member of the general public to go about in fear of having gruesome and uncanny currents of mesmeric influence poured upon him from unexpected directions.

It is quite easy for any ordinary person to resist any effort on the part of another to act upon him in this way, and in all the terrible cases of which we hear, where some weak-willed victim is used as a tool in the hands of an unscrupulous villain, we may be sure that there has been a long series of previous experiments, to which the victim willingly lent himself, before that baneful control was so firmly established.

It is only in novels that one glance from the eye of the bold, bad man reduces the unfortunate heroine to abject submission. In real life those who are unselfish and determined need have no fear.

In close connection with mesmerism is the study of the various types of clairvoyance which may be developed under its influence; but I have devoted several lectures recently to clairvoyance, so I am purposely omitting special reference to that subject now.

The connection is simply that before the higher faculties can be employed the lower must be controlled, and as many persons have not yet learnt to do this for themselves, it is only when some external repression is applied that their inner senses have any opportunity of action. But in all cases it is better for the man to manage his own affairs, and wait for psychic powers until he can obtain them naturally in the course of his evolution, without needing the application of force from without to aid him in conquering his own lower nature.

Steady natural development is always the safest and best; and the character is in all cases the first point to which training should be applied. Let him educate his heart, that it shall be pure and true; and his intellect, that he may be balanced by common-sense and reason; so shall he be ready for psychic faculty and mesmeric power when they come to him,

and as of old, it still remains true “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”



CHAPTER 7. TELEPATHY AND MIND-CURE

Let us commence by defining the meaning of our terms. The term telepathy is derived from two Greek words, and its literal meaning is “feeling at a distance,” but it is now generally used almost synonymously with thought-transference, and may be taken to cover any transfer of an image, a thought or a sensation from one person to another by non-physical means – means unknown to ordinary science. The word “mind-cure” bears its meaning on its face – unless indeed one reverses the arrangement of the words; it does not mean a cure for a mind diseased, but the curing of physical ills by the use of the mind, or at least by distinctly non-physical means. So we see that both these subjects are closely connected with the influence and power of thought, and a comprehension of them will therefore largely depend upon thoroughly understanding these latter questions. Let us spend a few minutes, then, in considering exactly how we think.

To us thought seems an instantaneous process; we have a proverb “quick as thought,” Yet, rapid though it be, it is more complicated than we suppose. In that respect it resembles the process by which sensation reaches the brain from the different parts of the body. We commonly think of that also as almost instantaneous, but science assures us that it is not so in reality. When, for example, we grasp something which is too hot, we quickly drop it; yet in that moment of time two distinct transactions have taken place. The nerves of the hand have, as it were, telegraphed to the brain the message, “This object is too hot,” and the brain has sent back the answer, “Then drop it,” and it is only in response to this order that the hand relaxes, and the object is released. The rate at which these messages travel has been measured by students of physics, so that the time occupied is appreciable by their instruments, though to us it seems indistinguishable.

How We Think

An analogous process takes place every time we think, though in this case it needs clairvoyant sight to watch what happens. To one who possesses the sight of the mental plane, thought is distinguishable in its formation as a vibration of the matter of the mental body of the thinker. Then it is observable that by that vibration another is set up – a vibration an octave lower, as it were, in the grosser matter of the thinker’s astral body, and

from that in turn the etheric particles of the man's brain are affected, and through them at last the denser grey matter is brought into action. All these successive steps must be taken before a thought can be translated into action on the physical plane; it may be said that the thought has to pass through two whole planes and part of another before it can come into effect down here. I must describe to you how this appears from the clairvoyant point of view, so that you may have a clear mental image before you.

Every cell in the physical brain – every particle of its matter even – has its corresponding and interpenetrating astral matter; and behind (or rather within) that, it has also the still finer mental matter. The brain is a cubical mass, but for the purposes of our examination let us suppose that it could be spread out upon a surface so that it should be only one particle thick. Let us further suppose that the astral and mental matter corresponding to it could also be laid out in layers in a similar manner, the astral layer a little above the physical, and the mental a little above the astral in turn. Then we should have three layers of matter of different degrees of density all corresponding one to the other, but not joined together in any way, except that here and there wires of communication existed between the physical and astral particles, and were continued up into the mental matter. That would fairly represent the condition of affairs existing in the brain of the average man. In the adept, the perfected man, every particle has its own wire, and there is full communication in every part of the brain alike; but the ordinary man has at present only very few of these channels of communication opened. Now we know that the brain is mapped out into certain areas, each corresponding to a certain set of qualities. In the perfect man all these qualities are fully developed, for the wires belonging to all of them are active; but in the ordinary man the great majority of the wires are as yet inactive, or hardly formed at all, and so the qualities corresponding to them are dormant in his brain.

We may image these wires as tubes, through which the true man within has to send down his thoughts to his physical brain. In the developed man, each thought has its own appropriate channel, through which it can descend directly to the correspondingly appropriate matter in the physical brain; but in the average man many of those channels are not yet open, and so the thought which ought to flow through them must go a long way out of its way, as it were – must find its expression through other and inappropriate channels, going laterally through the brain of

mental matter until it can find a way down, passing eventually through a tube not at all suited to it, and then, when it does reach the physical level, having to move laterally again in the physical before it encounters the physical particles which are capable of expressing it. We see at once how awkward and clumsy such a roundabout expression is likely to be, and we thus understand why it is that some people have no comprehension of mathematics, or no taste for music or art, as the case may be. The reason is that in the part of the brain devoted to that particular quality the communications have not yet been opened up, so that all thought connected with that subject has to go round through unsuitable channels; the brain is not yet in full working order, and therefore the thought cannot work freely in all directions. The physical brain is a solid mass, and the astral and mental brains interpenetrate it, so that the layers and tubes do not really exist; but nevertheless the symbol is an accurate one as describing the want of communication between the mental, astral and physical particles.

Picture to yourself what happens when we interchange ideas down here upon the physical plane. I formulate a thought, but before it can reach you it must pass from my mind through the astral matter of my brain down to the physical, and be translated into speech or writing. Then it appeals to you either through the waves of air which strike upon the tympanum of your ear, or through the light reflected to your eyes from the printed page; the idea enters the physical brain, but even then it has to pass up through the astral to the mental before it reaches the true man within, thus reversing the process which took place in my brain when I sent out that thought. Once more you see that this is a laborious method – that the message has to go a long way round; and it will inevitably occur to you to ask whether this circuitous route is really necessary – whether it is not possible to take a short cut, to tap the telegraph wire at some intermediate point. Since the starting point and the terminus are alike on the mental plane, since both on the way up and on the way down the message must pass through the astral and the etheric levels, is there no communication possible at any of these points, without lengthening the process by descent to the physical?

Three Types of Telepathy

There is such a possibility; indeed, there are three such possibilities; and this is precisely what is meant by telepathy. We may under favourable

circumstances open up a direct communication between two mental bodies, between two astral bodies, or between two etheric brains; and this gives us three varieties of telepathy. Let us begin with the lowest.

If I think strongly of any simple concrete form in my physical brain, I make that form in etheric matter, so that it can be seen by a clairvoyant; but in the effort of making that image I send out etheric waves all around me, like the waves which radiate from the spot where a stone falls into a pond. When these waves strike upon another etheric brain, they tend to reproduce in it the same image. It is not the image itself which is sent out, but a set of vibrations which will reproduce the image. It is not like a speaking-tube, through which the voice itself passes, and could be heard as a voice at any point of its journey. It rather resembles a telephone, in which it is not the voice itself which is conveyed, but a number of electrical vibrations set up by the voice, which when they enter the receiver are transmuted into the sounds of that voice once more. If you cut the telephone wire and listened at the end of it without a receiver, you will hear nothing, for the vibrations are not the sound, but under proper conditions they will reproduce the sound.

In exactly this way a simple form may readily be transferred from one brain to another. It is an experiment that may easily be tried, if any two people are sufficiently interested to take a little trouble with it. One of them would have to think strongly of some simple geometrical form, such as a cross, for example, or a triangle, while the other would have to sit quietly, and note what ideas formed themselves in his mind. In a number of cases such an effort would be successful the second or third time it was tried, though of course some people are more sensitive than others, and some people can form clearer images than others. In this case we have come down to the etheric state of matter, so that we are only one remove from the ordinary method of speech or writing; in fact, what we have done is very like Marconi's wireless telegraphy. Let us see whether the same thing can be effected a stage earlier, at the astral level.

Not only can it be done, but it is constantly being done all round us, though we do not notice it. The astral body is the vehicle of emotion and passion, as we have seen in previous lectures, so that what is conveyed from one person to another at this level will be an impression of a passional or emotional nature. Notice it for yourselves in family life. When one person is in a condition of deep depression, it will be found that

others round him are liable to be affected in the same way. If one person is especially irritable, it will soon be observed that others in turn become less serene and more readily affected than usual. This means that any person who gives way to a strong wave of feeling of any sort is radiating a certain rate of astral vibration which tends to reproduce that state of feeling in others as it impinges upon their astral bodies. The case in which above all others this is important is with regard to the dead, for they are living entirely in the astral vehicle, and so are more sensitive to these waves of emotion than the living, who are to some extent protected by the density and dullness of their physical bodies. So if a man selfishly gives way to uncontrolled grief for the dead, he often causes his departed friend the most acute and profound depression. On the other hand, if he thinks of his friend with love and an earnest desire for his progress, he may help instead of hindering, because these feelings also will faithfully reproduce themselves in the astral body of the dead man. This is a case of real telepathy, or “feeling at a distance.”

Now let us advance one stage more, and see whether it is not possible that the thought may be communicated directly from mind to mind on its own level, without descending even so far as to the astral plane. This also can be done, and often is done, but as a regular thing it is a means of converse for the more exalted souls only. One who is highly developed may thus flash his ideas through space with literally the speed of thought, but for ordinary men as yet such power is rare. Nevertheless, it sometimes exists where there is unusually close sympathy between two persons, and I feel sure that when mankind is further evolved this will be our common method of communication. It is already employed by the great Masters of Wisdom in the instruction of their pupils, and in this way they can convey with ease the most complicated ideas.

We have before us, then, these three kinds of telepathy, all of them consisting simply of the conveyance of vibrations at their respective levels – liable, perhaps, to be confused by the superficial observer, but readily distinguishable by the trained clairvoyant. In a minor way we may find evidence of one or other of them almost daily, for we often observe cases in which some friend is thinking simultaneously along the same lines as ourselves – thinking, it may be, about a subject which has not occurred to either of us for months previously.

Mind-Cure

We at once see how closely associated is telepathy with mind-cure, which aims to transfer good, strong thoughts from the operator to the patient. We meet with various types of mind-cure, differing considerably in their teachings, and calling themselves Christian science, mental science, mind-healing, etc., but they all agree in endeavouring to produce physical cures by non-physical means. There seems to be a vague general opinion afloat that Theosophy is opposed to no form of faith; on the contrary, it points out whatever is good in each of them, emphasizes and explains it, and thus combines them all into one harmonious whole. It objects only to misunderstanding and misuse of dogma or practice; it seeks, not to attack these multitudinous religions, but to comprehend them intelligently and to select from them impartially whatsoever things in them are beautiful and true. Our belief is that it is a serious mistake for religious people to quarrel over trifles as they do. On broad principles of right and wrong they are all at one; they all agree that man ought to leave the lower and seek the higher; let them then band together to convert the rest of the world to that much of religious faith, and leave the discussion of unimportant details until that great task is accomplished. That seems to us to be a suggestion of the merest common-sense; yet how few can be induced to listen to it for a moment!

So we who study Theosophy are in no way opposed to mind-cure, though there are some times things connected with it to which we take exception. Its leading idea is a grand one – that of the power of thought. It is in no way new conception, for the old religions have always taught it; you will find it, for example, clearly laid down in the first chapter of that noble Buddhist book, *The Dhammapada*, a beautiful translation of which by Sir Edwin Arnold was quoted in my lecture on Buddhism. To claim for the mind-curists the credit of discovering the power of thought is a mistake, and shows a sad ignorance of the teaching of the great Oriental faiths; but it is true that they are making many people in this country see it now for the first time. For this, then, we owe thanks to them, that they are raising some people out of materialism, and opening their eyes to something higher and more rational; and that is a grand thing to do, for when it has once been done, further advance becomes possible. All honour to them for their share in this work of elevating the thought of the time; and though there are points in their schemes that we may criticize, let us never forget that they have this always to their credit. Let me briefly mention first certain dogmas of theirs with which I cannot agree, and get those out of our way, so that afterwards we may turn to the more

congenial task of stating the ideas with which we found ourselves in sympathy.

Some Objections to It

First, I have never been able to see why a medical process should be erected into a religion; one might as well make a religion of homeopathy or hydropathy. So to those who are working upon such an unsatisfactory mental basis, I would offer the magnificent system of philosophy which they will find in Theosophy – a scheme which will give them food for thought, and supply them with a rational theory of the universe. One of the principal schools of mind-cure denies altogether the existence of matter – one which calls itself Christian science, though it is difficult to see upon what grounds such a name was assumed, since to deny the existence of matter is neither Christian nor scientific. Certainly it cannot be the latter, for it is matter only that science can cognize, and all its experiments are conducted by its means. And this doctrine of the non-existence of material things is emphatically not Christian, but pagan, for it is the teaching of one of the oldest Oriental systems.

There is a grand truth behind it, if it is rightly understood. All manifestation comes forth from the Absolute, and presumably all will one day return to Him. All manifestation, therefore, is impermanent, and from the point of view of eternity may be regarded as fleeting and momentary and hardly worth taking into account at all. Still, to say that it does not exist seems to be misleading, since it is in truth just as much one of the manifestations of the Logos as is that spirit which is its other pole. The Lord Buddha has said that there are two things which are eternal, akasa and nirvana; and the context seems to show us that he means what we now call matter and force. Herein modern science agrees with him; and it seems to me that it is both truer and safer to recognize that while manifestation exists each type of matter is real on its own plane. It is true that while we are on the physical plane only physical matter is real to us, and astral and mental matter remain invisible to the lower senses, while when we raise our consciousness to the higher planes this condition of things is reversed; but it is the focus of our consciousness that has changed, not the manifestation of the Logos. So while we fully recognize that the unseen things are the most important, we yet prefer to regard matter as real to us as long as we are upon its level. It scarcely seems sensible first to deny the existence of the body, and then to point to an

improvement in its condition as the result of the denial of its existence; for how can one cure that which does not exist?

I incline to believe that this denial of matter is probably in essence a reaction against the old and horrible theory of a personal devil. Our friends feel intuitively that the idea of evil imposed upon us from without is an absurdity, since every man makes his own good and evil destiny for himself; so they say there is in truth no evil but that which we make – all is subjective; and then, since they constantly find themselves struggling against matter and its qualities, they make the old mistake of identifying matter with evil, and so come to the conclusion that there is really no matter. It is strange thus to find Bishop Berkeley's theory reappearing amidst such different surroundings, and we find ourselves reminded of Swift's remark about him, "If Berkeley says there is no matter, then surely it is no matter what he says!"

But the point in all these theories to which I feel myself bound to take exception is the idea of securing wealth by undue influence; there I must most emphatically disagree altogether. Even to ask money for the use of mental power in curing disease seems to me undesirable; to use mental power in order unlawfully to extract it from others is a degradation and prostitution of the higher knowledge which ought to be held sacred for unselfish work. He who would seek wealth through mental effort should do so through legitimate channels only, and his attempt should be rather to limit his desires than to increase his possessions, for that alone is the path of true wisdom.

Yet again – I know the value of strong faith and affirmation as well as any man, yet truth forbids that I should deny that a body can ever be in ill-health. The true man, the ego, the soul, is not ill, and if the denial is understood in that sense there can be no objection to it. But it is not usually understood in that sense; the statement is clearly made that the way to get rid of a headache is to assert "I have no headache"; an assertion which may presently become true, but is undoubtedly false when it is first made. I do not deny that by persistently making that false statement an effect may be produced; but it seems to me that the falsehood is a much more serious evil than the headache or the toothache which it eventually removes. Any man may lawfully say "My head or my tooth shall not ache," and in thus setting his will persistently against the pain he may probably drive it away. Such an effort of will is legitimate and

even admirable; the concentration of thought which it implies is a splendid exercise for any man. In this way one may well think against any disease, and thus repel its attacks, avoiding it altogether if it has not yet effected a lodgement in the body, and greatly enhancing the effect of remedial measures if it is already in possession. The power of thought is enormous, and can hardly be exaggerated.

The Power of Thought

This brings us to that part of the teaching of the mental scientists which we can unreservedly approve. When they exhort their clients to think always cheerful thoughts, to cast away from them fear and worry, to avoid sedulously that faultfinding which always intensifies the evil to which it draws attention – in all this, and much more that they say, we have for them nothing but unstinting praise. In one of their books I find this advice given to a man: “If you feel depression or sad thought coming over you, think of something to be glad about, quick! You have not time to waste over depression!” And as to fear, again and again they assure us that most things that are feared never come to pass, and that, whether they do or not, we double our trouble if we suffer the pain of fearing it beforehand – all of which is true and healthy doctrine. Even this, however, may run somewhat into extremes. I have read the statement that if men had no fear of disease there would be no infection, which of course is not true, since men often catch disease when they do not know of its existence. But what is true is that the man who is fearless about a disease is much less likely to catch it; though even then it may happen to him, if he is overtired, if the forces of the body are not active enough to repel the infection. So that in that exaggerated form the remark is untrue, though it has a basis of truth.

The realization of the effect of thought upon others, and therefore of our responsibility for our thoughts, is also admirable. We find it constantly in the mental science literature of the better class. For example, it is stated that “false conceptions of God, and especially belief in eternal vindictive punishment, make their unwholesome influence felt in every bodily tissue” – a startling and yet obvious truth, which it would be well for many people who think themselves orthodox to take seriously to heart. Again, I find them asking us how we can wonder that we have such an increase of all diseases among us, especially nervous diseases, when for many generations the whole atmosphere has been full of chronic, fearful,

selfish thought about religious matters – loaded with the thought-forms of terror-stricken men about an angry God, a horned devil with a barbed tail, the flames of hell, and other abominable figments of the diseased ecclesiastical imagination – an idea with much truth in it, as any Theosophist will readily realize.

I heartily agree also with the dictum which I find our friends laying down, that if a man thinks himself a poor worm and a miserable sinner, full of natural depravity, that is exactly the way to make him an unpleasant entity of that description! If he despises himself to begin with, he is likely to become despicable; if he respects himself he is likely to remain worthy of respect. If he realizes himself as a spark of the Divine Life, and so knows that he can do all things through the Christ within, which strengthen him, he is far less likely to be swept away by the storm of passion, far less likely to yield to the insistent temptation. It is true that we all are sinners, but we surely need not aggravate our offences by being miserable sinners; and as to worms, we have passed through the reptilian stage many aeons ago, and there is nothing to be gained by talking nonsense! We are far more likely to be encouraged to forsake sin and to rise to virtue if we comprehend our true place and dignity, than if we believe, or profess to believe, a degrading falsehood. The “miserable sinner” can excuse himself by taking refuge in platitudes about human frailty: the Divine spark knows that he himself is responsible for his own actions and his own evolution, and that he has the power to make himself what he will.

One passage which I met with in reading books on mental cure I should like to quote verbatim, for it is a most beautiful idea, and as entirely Theosophical as though it had come straight from one of our own teachers. “Knead love into the bread you bake; wrap strength and courage in the parcel you tie for the woman with the weary face; hand trust and candour with the coin you pay to the man with the suspicious eyes.” Quaint in expression, but lovely in its thought; truly the Theosophical concept that every connection is an opportunity, and that every man whom we meet even casually is a person to be helped. Thus the student of the Good Law goes through life distributing blessings all about him, doing good unobtrusively everywhere, though often the recipients of the blessing and the help may have no idea whence it comes. In such benefactions every man can take his share, the poorest as well as the richest; all who can think can send out kindly, helpful thoughts, and no such thought has ever failed, or can ever fail while the laws of the

universe held. You may not see the result, but the result is there, and you know not what fruit may spring from that tiny seed which you sow in passing along your path of peace and love.

How Men Are Cured

Turning from the general principles to the definite cures which are frequently effected, it remains for us to consider how they are produced. There are several methods, and I think we may divide them into four classes, though there is also a fifth to which I must refer – one apart from any ordinary cures such as we have to consider, but nevertheless necessary to make our list perfect.

1. The first type is that which denies the existence of matter and disease, and aims at curing the person simply by making him believe he is well. A considerable amount of hypnotic influence is frequently exercised in the course of such efforts, and the hope is that if the man really believes himself well, the mind acting upon the body (which, however, does not exist) will force it into harmony with itself, and so produce a cure. They never can call it a cure, I notice, but always employ the scriptural word “healing,” so as to cast a sort of religious glamour over the transaction, and suggest a comparison with the miracles described in the bible. It seems to me better to divest the subject of all unusual terms which tend to obscure the matter and throw a veil of sentiment over plain fact. We say that the ordinary doctor “cures” us by his skill; why then must we abandon the Latin word for the Saxon when we speak of the result of a mind-cure?

2. The second class holds (truly enough) that all illness means inharmony of some sort in the system, and the effort of its members is to restore harmony, usually by the transfer of vibrations from themselves. The operator endeavours to bring himself into a condition of intense harmony and peace and devotion, and then to project this influence upon the patient, or to enfold him in it. The practitioner of either this type or the first does not care to know what is the matter with the patient; the nature of the disease is of no importance to him; in any case it must be disharmony, and he can cure it by establishing harmony once more.

3. The third class just pours vitality into the patient, again largely irrespective of the nature of the disease, though some practitioners of

this method do make an attempt to direct their stream to the portion of the body which is affected. Many people who are themselves in strong health radiate a great deal of vitality quite unconsciously, and the sick or weak feel better and stronger for their very presence.

4. Our fourth class adopts what we may call, by comparison with the others, a scientific method. They try to discover exactly what is wrong, picture to themselves mentally the diseased organ, and then image it as it ought to be. The idea here is that the strong thought will mould etheric matter into the desired form, and that will help nature to build up new tissues much more rapidly than would otherwise be possible. It is obvious that this plan demands more knowledge than the others; to be successful along this line a person must have at least some acquaintance with anatomy and some idea of physiology.

Types of Disease

There is no doubt that all these methods sometimes succeed, and they would do so oftener and more fully if they were employed more scientifically and with greater knowledge of the human body and its structure. Consider the various classes of diseases to which we are subject. The mind-curists are right in their contention that many of them proceed from want of harmony, and it is chiefly want of harmony between the etheric and the physical particles in some part of the body – most often of all in the brain. We must remember that there is a close connection between the mental body, the astral body and the etheric double in man, so that it is well within the bounds of possibility to influence one of them through the others. All nervous diseases imply a jangled, inharmonious condition of the etheric double; and that seems very often to be the cause of diseases of the digestive organs, of headache and sleeplessness. In all such cases what is needed is first of all to quiet the hurried, irregular vibrations, and give Nature an opportunity to reassert herself. The strong, quiet, persistent thought of the operator tends to produce such an effect, and leaves the patient soothed and strengthened. The system of pouring in vitality is also helpful, if it be not a type that will aggravate the restless symptoms. In almost any kind of illness, to take the patient's mind off it, and calm and encourage him, is a long way towards a cure. Many a doctor of the older schools does far more good by the confidence he inspires than by his drugs.

But there is a class of human ills where there is a definite lesion or wound. Can mind-cure do anything with it? The first and second kind seem less effective here, though always to quiet and encourage the sufferer increases his chance of recovery. The third plan would also assist Nature to recuperate; but such cases as these are certainly best met by the fourth method, according to which an effort is made to image the wounded part as it should be in health, and thus assist the building in of new tissue. This is of course merely an expedient to hasten the natural process of recovery.

In another class of human disease we have the presence of some poison in the blood, and in yet another the illness is in reality the life-history of a microbe, as is the case in most infectious diseases. It would probably be difficult to deal directly with these by mental cure, but it might assist by giving the patient greater strength to enable the natural guardians of his body to drive out the foreign invader. I hear that the head of the least scientific of the schools of mind-cure has recently issued an order that infectious cases should not be treated by her followers. If people would only look at this matter scientifically and reasonably, and consider exactly what mental treatment can do, and what it cannot be expected to achieve, they would be saved much trouble and danger. If they could understand that in many cases it is a valuable auxiliary to the ordinary treatment, but is by no means always competent to take its place, it might be more successful than it is now.

It is obvious that different diseases must be met by different methods, and that though there may perhaps be a universal cure for all physical ills, non of these plans which I have described contain it. The strong centre of quiet thought set up in the second of them cannot fail to do good to any man; yet regarded as an attempt to cure a wound, let us say, it is a great waste of force; it is like pouring a bucket of water over a man in order to wash his finger! And being, as far as the wound is concerned, a blind effort, it can never be so concentrated as one made on the fourth plan, which forms a mould to assist Nature in repairing the damage. It is probable that a great Adept could so hasten the natural process as to cause an almost instantaneous building into shape of the tissues which had been injured or destroyed; but the thought of an ordinary man is never strong enough for that, and he can only hope to produce his result by continuous action.

A Great Healing Principle

5. Nevertheless, there is another method of which we know very little, though unmistakable traces of it occasionally appear. No one who hears or reads of it need presumptuously suppose that he or she possesses the power which it gives; though unfortunately human self-conceit is so great that each is quite sure to do so instantly! We who have to lecture or to write know this only too well. If we, for the sake of our earnest students and as an encouragement for them, make an effort to describe the sight of the buddhic plane, immediately somebody who has perhaps once had half a glimpse of something astral will come trotting up to say that his experiences on the buddhic plane were far grander than those which the unfortunate lecturer or writer endeavoured to describe! But in spite of this certainty that the information will be misapplied, I must yet mention that there is another method connected with the great healing principle in Nature – with a mighty life-force from some far higher level, which may under certain circumstances and for a limited time be poured out through a man without his detailed knowledge or volition. In that case his very touch will heal, and there seems to be no limit to the power employed, and no disease that cannot be cured by it. We know little of it, I say, except that it is among the powers of one of the great orders of the devas, or angels, as our orthodox friends would call them. The power undoubtedly exists, but beyond that we can say very little. Our own president, Colonel Olcott, once possessed this marvellous power for a time, and effected some extraordinary cures while it remained with him.

Out of it emerges this great fact, that through this idea of mind-cure many thousands have been induced to accept the reality of the power of thought, and to understand that there is something outside of this mere world of physical matter; and that at least is a good thing, and an achievement upon which mind-cure may reasonably be congratulated. But it will be well for those who study it to learn that it should be used only for altruistic purposes, and to try to raise their thought to something higher than the mere curing of the physical body. For those who have no thought beyond that will presently find their occupation gone, since as the world evolves there will surely come a time when disease shall be no more, because man will at last have learnt to live reasonably, purely and healthily. But if they turn their knowledge to a higher use, and leave the physical for the mental, the curing of the body for the development of the soul, they may be a mighty force for the evolution of the world. Let them

think less of body, and more of life and soul; less of removing physical ailment, and more of removing ignorance and prejudice; less of bodily health and of personal gain, and more of love and compassion and brotherhood; so shall their rapidly-spreading movement become a power for good which cannot readily be overestimated, a world-wide blessing which shall endure and flourish through the ages which are yet to come.



CHAPTER 8. MAGIC: WHITE AND BLACK

The dictionary definition of the word magic is “the use of supernatural means to produce preternatural results.” In Theosophy we cannot agree with that definition, because we hold that nothing is supernatural, and that however unusual or curious any phenomenon may be, it happens in obedience to the laws of nature. We recognize that as yet man knows very few of these laws, and that consequently many things may happen that he cannot explain; but, reasoning from analogy as well as from direct observation, we feel certain that the laws themselves are immutable, and that whenever anything to us inexplicable is produced, the inexplicability is due to our ignorance of the laws and not to any contravention of them. Our knowledge is as yet so limited in so many ways, that it is not remarkable that we should now and then come into contact with occurrences that we do not understand. We know only one small fraction of our world – just this lowest physical part of it; and even with that our acquaintance is only very partial and superficial. But the average man is profoundly unconscious of the extent of his ignorance; and he is so shocked and surprised at any manifestation which transcends the boundaries of his infinitesimal experience.

With regard to this question of magic many people express exactly the same doubt as they do with regard to telepathy, mind-cure, mesmerism, apparitions, and spiritualism; they say, “Is there any such thing as magic?” There are always to be found those who deny the possibility of anything which is outside of their own experience; “We have never seen these things,” they say, “and consequently we know that all who have seen them are either fools or knaves, either fraudulent or deluded.” It is useless to waste argument upon people whose minds are in so undeveloped a condition as that; it is better to leave them undisturbed to wallow in the self-satisfaction of their own invincible ignorance. They are in the position of the African king who was indignant at the shameless falsehood of the traveller who asserted that in other lands water sometimes became solid. Ice was outside of his experience, and so he denied the possibility of its existence; and just at the same mental level are the people who ignorantly ridicule what they do not understand.

If we wish to try to improve upon the definition given in the dictionary, we may describe magic as the employment of forces as yet not recognized to produce visible results. In many cases it is the control of

such forces by the human will. Once more there are persons who deny that any forces can be directly controlled by the will, and once more it is simply a question of how much the person happens to know. The inexperienced but conceited man will deny anything and everything; the wiser man who has studied has learnt to be more cautious, and so for idle assertion he substitutes enquiry and investigation. The adoption of this latter attitude with regard to the production of physical results by as yet unrecognized forces speedily shows that there are many instances of this, and that they may be connected by easy gradations with phenomena which are common and readily accepted.

If we accept some such definition of magic as that suggested above, there arises the further question what is meant by the adjectives white and black? In this association they are simply synonymous with good and evil. The unrecognized forces of nature are no more good and evil in themselves than are the recognized forces of electricity, steam, or gunpowder. All of these things may be employed for good or ill according to the mental attitude of the man who employs them. Just as gunpowder may be usefully applied to clear away the rocks which obstruct the channel at the entrance of a harbour, or maliciously used by the evilly-disposed person to destroy the house of his enemy, so may the unrecognized magical forces be employed by wicked men for selfish purposes, or by the good man for the helping and shielding of his fellows.

The Unrecognized Forces of Nature

Let us see what some of these unrecognized forces are. When I was speaking about mesmerism I mentioned the possession by every man of a certain amount of nerve-ether, and also of a vital fluid which flowed along with this nerve-ether. Both of these, you will remember, can be projected under the direction of the human will; so in that way mesmerism itself may claim to be a modified kind of magic, since in it these unseen forces are manipulated by the human will, and visible results are produced thereby. The condition of the subject may be affected to a considerable extent; not only may all sorts of delusions be produced, but the limbs may be made rigid and insensible to pain, and the man may be thrown into a deep trance. So that we may claim these two forces of vitality and nerve-ether as among those which can be employed and have been employed by magic.

Another great force which is used perhaps more frequently than any other is that of the elemental essence. It is impossible for me to turn aside from my subject in order to describe fully what elemental essence is, since that would require a whole lecture. I can therefore give but a slight sketch of it now, and I must refer my hearers to the Theosophical Manuals and textbooks for fuller information. When speaking on reincarnation and on the various bodies of man, I explained how the ego when descending to a new birth draws round himself matter of the various planes, in order that later on he may build vehicles corresponding to each of these levels. It must be remembered that all this matter - alike that which draws the ego to himself for his own use, and the great sea of matter which lies outside - is not dead, but instinct with life. This life is essentially divine, for there is no life which is not divine; but it is nevertheless at a much earlier stage of evolution than the life which manifests in humanity or in the animal and vegetable kingdoms. We must then recognize that all this matter is charged with a kind of living essence; and the study of occultism enables us to distinguish between the many varieties of this strange living essence and to learn that these different kinds may be employed for different purposes in magic. The finer and more plastic matter of the astral and mental planes is readily sensitive to the action of the human will; so that the living force contained in this essence - even though it be divine force - is to a great extent at the disposal of anyone who learns how to use it.

Sometimes we read in Theosophical literature of "elementals." Properly speaking the word applies only to temporary creations built up by the action of the human will out of this living essence and the matter in which it inheres. Such entities are impermanent, and are in no sense of the word evolving beings. The divine essence of which they are composed has an evolution of its own as essence; but the entity temporarily built out of it has no evolution as an entity, and no power to reincarnate. It may be described indeed as consisting for the time of a body and a soul, for the matter and its living essence make a vehicle, which is energized by the thought-form as a separate entity will depend upon the strength of the thought-force which is its ensouling principle and holds it together. As soon as that force dies away its body of astral or mental matter (infused with elemental essence) will disintegrate, and the essence and matter will return to the surrounding atmosphere from which they were drawn. These thought-forms, however, may be capable and forceful while they last; and their employment by the will of the thinker is one of the

commonest and yet one of the most effective of the acts of magic. Those who wish for further information on this important subject will find it in a book called *Thought-Forms*, in the production of which I had the honour of collaborating with Mrs. Besant. I should recommend all who are interested in this matter to study that book carefully, as the coloured illustrations which are there given will help the inquirer to a ready comprehension of the way in which forces act.

Nature-Spirits

We have also to consider another class of entities which are frequently employed in magic; and this time we are dealing with real and evolving beings – not merely with temporary creations. There is a whole kingdom of vivid life which does not belong to our human line of evolution, but runs parallel with it, and utilizes this same world in which we live. This evolution contains all grades of intelligences, from entities at the level in that respect of our animal kingdom, to others who equal or even greatly surpass the highest intellectual power of man. This evolution does not normally descend to the lower part of the physical plane; its members, at any rate, never take upon themselves dense physical bodies such as ours. The majority of those with whom we have to deal possess only astral bodies, although many types come down to the etheric part of the physical plane and clothe themselves with its matter, thus bringing themselves nearer to the limit of ordinary human sight. There are vast hosts of these beings, and an almost infinite number of types and classes and tribes among them.

Broadly speaking, we may divide them into two great classes (a) nature-spirits or fairies, and (b) angels or, as they are called in the East, devas. This second class begins at a level corresponding to the human, but reaches up to heights far beyond any that humanity has as yet touched, so that its connection with magic is naturally of the slightest kind, and belongs solely to one special type of it, of which we shall speak presently. The nature-spirits have been called by many different names at different periods and in various countries. We read of them as fairies, elves, pixies, kobolds, sylphs, gnomes, salamanders, undines, brownies, or “good people,” and traditions of their occasional appearance exist in every country under heaven. They have usually been supposed to be merely the creations of popular superstition, and it is now doubt, true that much has been said of them which will not bear scientific investigation.

Nevertheless it is true that such an evolution does exist, and that its members occasionally, though rarely, manifest themselves to human vision. Normally they have no connection whatever with humanity, and the majority of them rather shun than court the presence of man, since his ill-regulated emotions, passions, and desires are to them a source of much disturbance and acute discomfort; yet now and then exceptional circumstances have brought some of them into direct contact and even friendship with man.

Naturally they possess powers and methods of their own, and sometimes they can be either induced or compelled to put these powers at the service of the student of occultism. Although they are not as yet individualized, and in that respect correspond rather to the animal kingdom than to humanity, yet their intelligence is in many cases equal to that of man. They seem, however, to have usually but little sense of responsibility, and the will is generally somewhat less developed with them than it is with the average man. They can therefore readily be dominated by the exercise of mesmeric powers, and can then be employed in many ways to carry out the will of the magician. There are many purposes for which they may be utilized, and so long as the tasks prescribed to them are within their power they will be faithfully and surely executed.

All this will no doubt seem strange and new to many minds, but any student of the occult will confirm what I have said here as to the existence of these beings and the possibility that they can be used in various ways by one who understands them. I have myself made a considerable study of this subject, and you must therefore pardon me if I appear to speak positively and as a matter of course with regard to many things that for the majority of you may seem questionable or beyond human knowledge. To give a full account of all of the many classes of these nature-spirits would be to write a kind of natural history of the astral plane, and in order to describe them all we should need many large volumes. Yet the man who wishes to deal fully and efficiently with what is called practical magic must not only be able to recognize immediately upon sight all these thousands of varieties, but must also know which of them can most suitably be employed for any special piece of work that he may have in hand.

The forces to which I have referred are those most commonly employed in ordinary types of magic; but in addition to them the occult student has at his command stupendous reserves of power of various sorts not yet known to the scientific world. There is an etheric pressure, just as there is an atmospheric pressure; but the scientific man will never be able to use this force, or even to demonstrate its existence, until he can invent some substance which shall be impervious to ether, so that he can construct a chamber or vessel out of which ether can be pumped, precisely as the air is withdrawn from the reservoir of an air-pump. There are methods known to occult science by which this can be done, and so this tremendous etheric pressure can be reined in and utilized. There are also mighty electric and magnetic currents, which can be tapped and brought down to the physical plane by him who understands them; and an enormous amount of energy may be liberated by the mere process of transferring matter from one condition to another. So that along different lines there is much energy available in nature for a man who knows how to use it; and all of it is controllable by the developed human will. Another point that must not be forgotten is that all round us stand those whom we call the dead – those who have only recently put off their physical bodies, and are still hovering close about us in their astral vehicles. They also may be influenced, either mesmerically or by persuasion, just as those still in the flesh can be; and many cases arise in which we have to take account of their action. and of the extent to which their control of the astral forces can be brought into play.

The Magic of Command

We may usefully divide the subject of magic into two great parts, according to the methods which it employs; and we may characterize these respectively as methods of evocation and of invocation – of command and of entreaty.

Let us consider the former first. Although it may act through many different channels, the one great force at the back of all magic of this first type is the human will. By this the vitality and the nerve-ether can be directed; by this all the varieties of elemental essence may be guided, selected and built into forms either simple or complex according to the work that they have to do. By this magnetic control may be gained over any of the classes of nature-spirits; by this also the wills of others, whether living or dead, may be so dominated that they become

practically but tools in the hands of the magician. Indeed it is scarcely possible to fix the limits of the power of the human will when properly directed; it is so much more far-reaching than the ordinary man ever supposes, that the results gained by its means appear to him astounding and supernatural. The study of this subject brings one gradually to the realization of what was meant by the remark that if faith were only sufficient it could remove mountains and cast them into the sea; and even this oriental description seems scarcely exaggerated when one examines authenticated instances of what has been achieved by this marvellous power.

But in order that this mighty engine of the will may work effectively, the magician must possess perfect confidence. This is gained in various ways, according to the type to which the mind of the magician belongs. Broadly speaking, we may classify the magicians under four heads, though in a detailed account we should have to take into consideration the various subdivisions and modifications of these.

Four Types of Magicians

First, there is a type of man who possesses such iron determination and such confidence in himself and in his power to dominate nature by the mere force of his spirit that he gains his end solely by determined insistence upon it. He realizes that his will is the true motive force, and he neither knows nor cares through what intermediary agencies this will may work. He is careless, and may even be ignorant, as to methods; but rides down all opposition, as it were, by brute force, and does that which he wishes simply through the tremendous strength of his unalterable conviction that it can be done and shall be done. Such magicians are few, but they exist; and if not benevolently inclined they may be formidable. They do not need a method by which to gain confidence; they appear to possess it in their very nature.

The second type of man gains the necessary confidence to command from his thorough knowledge of the subject with which he is dealing and of the forces which he is employing. He may be called the scientific magician, for he has made a close study of the astral and mental physics, he knows all about the different types of elemental essence and the various classes of nature-spirits, so that in every case he is able to use the most appropriate means to obtain the result which he desires with the least possible

exertion or difficulty. His thorough familiarity with the subject makes him feel thoroughly at home with it and capable of dealing with any emergencies which may arise.

Many such men also make a study of appropriate times and seasons as well as of appropriate forces; they know at what moment it will be easiest to produce a certain result, and so they gain what they need with the least possible expenditure. This whole question of times and seasons and of periodical influences which wax and wane is one of extreme interest; but it would take us too far from the main line of our subject if we were to plunge into that this evening, for it would mean the opening up and the review of the whole question of astrology. It is sufficient for us for the moment if we understand that there are times when, and conditions under which, certain efforts can more easily be made, so that what can be done only with extreme difficulty (or perhaps even cannot be done at all) at one time, may be managed with comparative ease at another. This obviously implies the existence of influences, planetary or otherwise, which are acting upon and within our world; and the exhaustive knowledge of all these and of their combinations is naturally necessary for the worker in practical magic.

Another type of magician attains the confidence necessary to insure obedience to his commands by means of faith or devotion. He has so firm a faith in his leader or deity, that he is certain that any command pronounced in that name must be instantly obeyed. I am not speaking merely of results which may be produced upon the mental and upon the astral planes, but also of definite and visible physical effects. We have only to read ecclesiastical history to come across many cases of wonderful cures of physical diseases which have been produced through just such determined efforts of faith as those to which I have referred. The authenticated accounts of the cures at Lourdes in France and at Knock in Ireland show that a great many ills, even of purely physical type, will yield before determined faith. Any man who has in this way obtained sufficient confidence will find his will so much strengthened thereby that he will be able to produce the most unexpected results.

It should be remembered that it is his own will which brings the satisfactory result – not the intervention of the Greater One whose name he speaks. I know that many earnest Christians attribute the healing directly to Christ, in whose name it is performed; but deeper study of the

subject will show them that cures precisely similar and quite as astonishing have been performed by equally earnest men in the name of the Lord Buddha, or in the name of Mithra, or of any other of the great leaders and teachers of the world. It is the tremendous faith that gives the power; in what or in whom is the faith matters but little. The greater person whose name is invoked may not even be aware of the circumstance; although if he does know and does in any way interfere we may be sure that it will rather be by the strengthening of the faith and will of his follower than by any special effort of his own power.

Yet another class consists of those who believe in the efficacy of certain ceremonies, or of certain formulae. For them and in their hands the formulae or the ceremonies are effective; but in most cases it is not because of any inherent virtue which the forms possess, but because of the confidence of the magician that when he employs them the result must inevitably ensue. If we read any account of the working of mediaeval alchemists, we shall see that they had many such ceremonies, and that the majority of them would have considered themselves incapable of obtaining their results without the surroundings to which they were accustomed. They wore robes of various types, they used Kabalistic figures, they waved round their heads swords magnetized for definite purposes; they burnt their drugs or sprinkled their essences. It is true that some of these things have also a certain potency of their own, but in the majority of cases all that they do is to give confidence to the performer, and so to strengthen his will to the requisite point. He has been told by his teachers or his scriptures that all these paraphernalia are effective, and that in using them he will certainly succeed. The man by himself might possibly waver and feel frightened; but with the proper robes and signs and weapons he feels so sure of success that he goes straight through without hesitation.

Three Types of Force

A magician of any one of these types has at his disposal the forces of three levels – the mental, the astral, and the etheric physical. All of these can be directed by the human will, and in using any one of them a man necessarily sets in motion vibrations in the others also. The scientific magician will choose among these, and so will save himself much exertion. Along other lines of magic than the scientific it is probable that the performer nearly always sets in motion much more force and power,

and employs much more energy than is at all needful for the object in hand; nevertheless he also attains his results, though it may be at the cost of superfluous disturbance and unnecessary fatigue to himself.

Without going into details, it is not difficult to see how a man who understands will make choice of his materials. If he is dealing with a man of great intellectual development and keen receptivity on the mental plane, it will obviously be better to approach him on that level by means of definite thought, or through the services of the nature-spirits abiding there. If on the other hand, he is dealing with a man whose life is intensely emotional, he will probably find it easier to impress him along that line, and consequently he will send thought-forms veiled in astral matter, or employ the services of the lower type of nature-spirits whose bodies are built of the matter of that plane. If he is dealing with a man of grossly material type, one who has dipped very deeply into the physical plane, it seems reasonable to employ the forces and intelligences which clothe themselves most readily in physical matter. But in all these cases alike the motive power at the back is the indomitable will of the operator, through whatever channels he may find it best to work.

Magic in Religion

We find abundant traces of this magic of command in the ceremonies connected with almost every religion in the world. You may remember that in speaking of Buddhism I drew your attention to a manifestation of it which appears in connection with the chanting of the Pirit; and you will see many signs of it in the accounts given to us of old Egyptian ceremonies. Indeed, we have obvious relics of it much nearer to us than that, for they appear again and again in the ritual of the Christian church. For example, it is well known to students of practical occultism that of all substances water is one of the most easily charged with force. It may readily be induced to absorb influence of any particular type, and will retain this unimpaired for a long period of time. We see analogy to this on the physical plane, for we know that water which has stood uncovered in a bedroom during the night is unfit for drinking purposes, because it has absorbed into itself all the impurities cast off during that period from the physical bodies of the sleepers. It is found that it may equally readily be charged with magnetism of any type, either for good or evil purposes, as will be seen by the accounts of various mesmeric experiments in almost any of the books devoted to that subject.

This fact seems to have been well known to those who established the ceremonies of the early Christian church. Even at the present day upon entering any Roman Catholic church we find at the door a stoup of holy water, as it is called; and it will be observed that the faithful as they enter dip their fingers into this water and make with it the sign of the cross upon their foreheads or breasts. If interrogated as to the meaning of this, they tell us that it is in order to drive away from them evil thoughts or feelings and to purify them for the services in which they are about to take part. The ignorant and boastful Protestant probably regards this as an instance of degrading superstition; but, as usual, that shows only that he knows nothing whatever of the subject.

Any student of occultism who will take the trouble to read in the Roman prayer-book the office for the making of holy water cannot fail to be struck with the fact that it is undoubtedly a definite magical ceremony. For the purpose of consecration of holy water the priest is directed to take clean water and clean salt; and he commences operations by a process which is called the exorcising of the salt and the water. He has to recite certain forms which, though by courtesy they are called prayers, are in reality adjurations of the strongest type. He adjures the salt and the water successively in the most determined language, commanding that all evil influences shall be driven out from them and that they shall be left clean and pure; and as he does this he is directed again and again to lay his hand upon the vessels containing the salt and the water. Evidently the whole ceremony is a mesmeric one, and the objectionable influence, if there be any, would be driven out by the time the priest had finished his devotions. Then having purified his elements – having removed from them anything that might be undesirable – he proceeds to magnetize them vigorously for a particular and definite purpose. Once more he recites determined adjurations, and is directed again and again as he uses these powerful words to make over the elements with his hand the sign of the cross, holding strongly in mind the will to bless. This means that he is saturating both the salt and the water with his own magnetic influence, specially charged and directed by his will for this clearly-defined purpose – that wherever this water shall be sprinkled all evil thought or feeling shall be driven away before it. Then with one final effort he casts the salt into the water in the form of a cross, and the ceremony is completed.

I have no doubt that there are many priests who simply go through all this ceremonial as a matter of form, without putting any thought or strength

into it. But I also know that there are many others to whom the ritual is intensely real – men who do throw strength and force into their proceedings; and naturally in their case the water is heavily charged with powerful magnetism and a decided magnetic result is produced. I myself have frequently performed this little ceremony as a priest of what was called the ritualistic section of the Church of England; and I can testify that in my own case I believed vividly in the efficacy of the operation, and I have no doubt therefore that the water which I magnetized was really effective for the purposes intended. Any one who is psychically sensitive may easily tell upon entering a Catholic church and just touching the holy water with the hand, whether or not the priest who consecrated it put real strength and thought into his work.

Consecrated water is employed in many other of the ceremonies of the Church. In baptism, for example, the water is carefully blessed before the ceremony commences; even in the services of the Church of England you will still find traces of this, for the priest prays that the water shall be sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin, and as he utters these words it is usual for him to make the sign of the cross in the water which is to be employed. It will be remembered also that churches and burial grounds are consecrated or set apart for a holy purpose, and there also a special effort is made to scatter good influences, so that all who enter shall thereby be brought into a proper and devotional frame of mind. Almost every object utilized in the service of the Church was originally consecrated in the same manner; the vessels of the altar, the vestments of the priest, the bells, the incense – all had their special services of blessing. In the case of the bells, they were permeated with certain rates of vibration and a certain type of magnetism, the idea being that the thoughts and feelings which these suggested should be spread abroad wherever the sound of the bells travelled – a perfectly scientific idea from the point of view of the higher occult physics. In the same way the incense was especially blessed, in order that his blessing might be showered wherever its perfume penetrated, and that its scent might drive away all evil thoughts or influences from the church in which it was used.

Mesmeric influence is again evident in the ceremony of the ordination of priests; for it will be remembered that not only does the bishop lay his hands upon the head of the candidate, but all the priests who are present converge their forces upon him and lay their hands upon his head also. Undoubtedly when all present are thoroughly in earnest this is no mere

outward sign; it must pass on from one to the other a strong influence of devotion and loyalty, and help to conform the confidence of the newly ordained priest as to the powers which have been given to him. The student of occultism cannot but see that all these are manifestly survivals from a time when practical magic was thoroughly understood in the Church. There is hardly a single ceremony among those used either in the Greek, Roman, or Anglican Churches which has not behind it some true occult significance, though in these days many people go through such ceremonies merely as a matter of form, and never even think that there may be something real and weighty behind them. In the older days people were not only less sceptical but also less ignorant, and those who arranged the ritual of the Church knew very well what they were doing.

Talismans

This leads us to consider the questions of talismans. There used to be universal belief that a jewel or almost any object might be charged mesmerically with good or evil influences; and though this idea would be in modern days be regarded by many as a mere superstition, it is nevertheless a fact that such force may be stored in a physical object, and may remain there for a long period of time. A man can pour his magnetism into such an object, so that his definite rate of vibration will radiate from it as light radiates out from the sun. The influence put into such an object may be either good or evil, helpful or harmful. In many cases such magnetic action resembles that of a cordial – that is to say, it is highly stimulant; in other cases it is arranged for the purpose of calming and soothing the subject, so that he may overcome his fears or his agitation. Such a talisman may be magnetized, for example, with the object of strengthening a man to resist a certain temptation – say that towards sensuality; and there is no doubt that when properly charged it has a powerful influence in the direction intended.

Here we have the philosophy of relics – the truth which lies behind the widely-spread veneration for them and belief in their efficacy. Every one of us has his special rates of mental and astral vibration, and any object which has been long in contact with us will be permeated with those rates of vibration and capable of radiating them in turn, or of communicating them with concentrated energy to any person who may wear the object or come within the range of its action. Anything therefore which has been in close contact with some great saint or some devoted person will bear

with it much of his own individual magnetism, and will tend to reproduce in the man or woman who wears it something of the same state of feeling which existed in him from whom it came. I have known of many instances in which such a talisman was effective – in which, for example, it was possible by its means to calm and soothe persons prostrated by nervous disease, so that they were enabled to gain the repose of which they were in such urgent need.

We must not forget that in many cases the faith of the wearer in the talisman also comes into play and contributes its quota to the effect. If a person is impressively informed by someone in whom he has confidence that a certain talisman will undoubtedly produce a certain result, his own firm expectation of that result tends to bring it about; but quite apart from man's faith in it, it is possible for a talisman to produce an effect even upon those who do not know of its presence. When charged by a powerful mesmerist certain objects will retain the magnetism for a very long period of time. I have seen in the British Museum Gnostic charms which still radiate quite a powerful and perceptible influence, although they must have been magnetized at least seventeen hundred years ago; and some Egyptian scarabaei are still effective, even though they are much older than that. Naturally it is possible to charge an object for evil as well as for good; any one who will take the trouble to read Ennemoser's History of Magic will find various instances quoted therein.

Charms or Mantrams

Another side of the subject is that connected with charms and mantrams. These are forms of words by means of which certain occult results are supposed to be achieved. Here also, as in the case of the talisman, definite effects are sometimes undoubtedly produced; and, as with the talisman, this result may be reached in either of two ways, or both of them may contribute towards it. In the majority of cases the formula does nothing beyond strengthening the will of the person who uses it, and impressing upon the mind of the subject the result which it is desired to achieve. The strong confidence of the operator that his formula must produce its effect, and the belief of the subject that such effect will be produced, are frequently quite sufficient for the purpose.

There is another and much rarer type of mantram in which the sounds themselves produce a definite effect. Each sound sets up its own

vibration, and an orderly succession of such vibrations following one another according to the predetermined scheme, may be so arranged as to evoke definite feelings or emotions or thoughts within the man. Many of the Sanskrit mantrams used in India are of this nature. In this case the charm is untranslatable, it must be employed in the original language and it must be correctly pronounced by one who understands how it is intended to be sounded. On the other hand, it is not in the least necessary for the success of that kind of mantram that the person who uses it should understand the meaning of the words, or even that the sounds should make intelligible words will be found in some of the Gnostic writings.

Be it always understood that along whatever line the magician works, by whatever means he obtains his confidence, the forces at this command may be employed for evil or for good according to the intention which lies behind them. We have spoken chiefly of the pleasanter side of the subject, dealing principally with cases in which the will of the operator was employed in order to help; but there have been and are cases of evil will, and it is important for us to remember this, because of the fact that such will may often be unconsciously exercised. That, however, belongs to the practical application of the subject to ourselves, with which I hope to deal next week when speaking upon the use and abuse of psychic powers.

Invocatory Magic

Let us turn now to the second type of magic – that which works by invocation – that which does not command, but persuades. It will be seen that this type of magic has at its command fewer resources than the other. Here the suppliant himself does nothing; he simply begs or bribes some one else to do something. The thought-form therefore is not at his command, nor are the various forms of forces such as etheric pressure or the use of the elemental essence. He confines himself to obtaining the services of definite living entities, whether human or non-human. Efforts in this direction are made much more commonly than we might at first sight suppose; for you will observe that whenever a man tries to produce a result, to obtain anything for himself, or to have facts or conditions modified by means of some agency outside of the physical plane, he is in reality using invocatory magic, although no such name may have entered his mind.

A great deal of the ordinary kind of prayer for selfish purposes is an example of this. I am speaking here only of that lower variety of prayer to which alone the name can properly be applied – that which definitely asks for something. The word prayer is derived from the Sanskrit prashna, through the Latin precor, and is connected with the German fragen; so that its original and proper meaning can be only a definite request. Often people incorrectly apply the name of prayer to what is in reality meditation or worship – the contemplation of the highest ideal known to the worshipper, and the endeavour to raise his own mind and heart upwards toward that object of worship. But the mere ordinary prayer, for definite and frequently physical gains, is certainly an attempt to draw down an influence from higher planes to produce visible results, and so comes clearly within our definition of magic. It frequently happens when two nations are engaged in a war that each of them will pray for its own success and for the destruction of the opposing armies; and this is clearly an endeavour to enlist invisible forces upon its side. Fortunately, however, this idea of calling in extraneous influences may be used for good as well as evil purposes, and we find that many efforts are made in this way to invoke from above some help for the soul.

Perhaps the most striking instance of this is to be found in the life of the Brahman. The whole of that life is practically one continuous prayer; for every one of his acts, even the smallest, a special form of petition is assigned. Though much more elaborate and detailed, it is somewhat on the lines of the form which is given for use in some Catholic convents, where the novice is instructed to pray every time that he eats that his soul may be nourished with the bread of life; every time that he washes his hands to form the aspiration that his soul may be kept pure and clean; every time that he enters a church to pray that his whole life may be one long service; every time that he sows a seed, to think of the seed of the word of God which is to be sown in the first place in his own heart of others; and so on. The life of the Brahman is precisely similar, except his devotion is on a larger scale and is carried into much greater detail. No one can doubt that he who really and honestly obeys all these directions must be deeply and constantly affected by such action.

We observe that although the invocatory magician is much more limited in his field of action than is he who proceeds by command, he has nevertheless the choice of several classes of entities to whom his appeal can be directed. He may beg help, for example, from angels, from nature-

spirits, or from the dead. We know how frequently and how readily our Roman Catholic friends invoke help from the guardian angels whom they believe to be always about them. That is an effort at invocatory magic, and it may in many cases obtain a definite response; whether it does so or not, at any rate some result is produced by the man's confidence in the efficacy of his supplication.

Evil Invocations

That is the good side of such magic; but it has also a real and serious evil side. We shall find that showing itself with painful prominence in the Voodoo or Obeah ceremonies of the Negroes. In these the magicians are endeavouring to invoke outside aid in order to work evil upon the physical plane; and it is unquestionable that they sometimes meet with a considerable amount of success in their nefarious efforts. I have seen a good deal of this in South America, and am therefore able personally to testify that results are produced along this undesirable line of activity. The same thing may occasionally be seen in India, more especially among the hill tribes. There it is by no means uncommon to find tribal gods worshipped, and the worship frequently takes the shape of propitiatory sacrifices, in return for which the tribal deity sometimes produces results upon the physical plane. We read, for example, of villages in which all goes well so long as the village god receives his accustomed offerings; but the moment that these regular meals are intermitted, trouble instantly manifest in some way or other. I heard of one case in which spontaneous fires broke out in the various huts of the village as soon as they neglected to look after their tribal deity in the usual way. In such cases there is an entity posing as the deity – an entity who enjoys the worship paid to him, or finds real pleasure and profit in the sacrifices which are offered.

It will be noticed that such sacrifices are usually of two kinds; either there is a sacrifice of some living creature in which blood is poured out, or else food of some kind (and preferably fresh food) is burnt, so that the fumes of it may arise. This implies that the tribal deity is a very low grade of entity, possessing a vehicle upon the etheric portion of the physical plane – a vehicle through which he can absorb these physical fumes and either draw nourishment from them or experience pleasure from partaking of them. It may be taken as a certain rule that every deity, under whatever name he may masquerade, who claims blood sacrifices or burnt sacrifices, is only a nature-spirit of a low and brutal type; for it is only to such an

entity that such abominations could by any possibility be pleasing. It will be remembered that in the earlier days of the Jewish religion horrible holocausts of this nature were frequently offered; but as we draw nearer to the present age and the Jewish race has taken its place in civilization, such sacrifices have naturally been discontinued. It is surely unnecessary to insist upon the obvious fact that no developed being of any sort, no angel or deva, could for one moment exact or consent to receive any form of offering which involves death and suffering. No beneficent deity has ever yet delighted in the foul scent and fumes of blood; and the higher types of religion have consistently avoided such horrors.

The Darker Magic

The distinguishing characteristic of that evil side of magic which has usually been called “black” is that its object is entirely selfish. There are many cases in which it is nothing more than this – in which its object is not to do evil for evil’s sake, but to obtain for the possessor of the powers whatever he may happen to desire at the moment. Much of the witchcraft of primitive tribes is of this nature, and here also there is no doubt that a certain measure of success frequently attend the efforts of the magician. I have myself seen instances of this; indeed, I once took the trouble to learn an elaborate ritual of this nature, which, if put into practice, would have given me the services of an entity which undertook to procure whatever its coadjutor might require. Not only would it furnish him with boundless wealth, but it would also carry out his wishes with regard to either his friends or his enemies. From what I saw in connection with other practitioners, I know that these offers could certainly be made good up to very high limits; but the conditions required were such that it was impossible for any right-thinking man to go further into the matter. The ritual required was easy of accomplishment, but the agreement with the entity would have had to be cemented with human blood in the first instance, and the creature would afterwards have needed regular food involving the sacrifice of lower forms of life. Much more of such magic exists in many parts of the world than is usually suspected. On the other hand, interesting developments of it are free from such horrors as were involved in the type just mentioned.

Petty Magic

It is no uncommon thing to find in the East men who have inherited from their fathers the services of some non-human entity, who in consideration of an occasional trifling provision of food will perform small phenomena of various kinds for the person to whom it is especially attached. Usually there are curious restrictions connected with the compact. Almost invariably the human partner in this bond is bound to give to no one the name or description of his unseen coadjutor; and, oddly enough, in a large number of cases the condition is attached that no money, or not more than a fixed and nominal amount may ever be obtained by the coadjutor's help or accepted for any exhibition of his peculiar powers.

I remember, for example, a man possessing such a partner who was brought to me while in the East. In this case the entity attached showed his power principally by bringing to his human partner any objects that might be indicated, in precisely the same way that such things are frequently brought at a spiritualistic séance. Fortunately, however, one of the stipulations which formed part of their agreement was that the unseen partner should never be asked to bring anything which was not honestly the property of his friend on the physical plane; otherwise a system of wholesale robbery would have been easy, and it would have been impossible to trace or punish the thefts.

The example of this power which was shown to me was conclusive. I went with the magician into a fruiterer's shop and bought a selection of fruit of various kinds, and had it laid aside for me until I should send to fetch it. All that was required was that the magician should see the fruit, so that he might know exactly what there was. Then driving directly home with my magician – of course leaving the fruit behind me in the shop – we asked whether he would be able to produce for us the various items of the purchase in any order we required. He seemed confident of this, and indeed the result showed that his trust in his unseen friend was fully justified. The man belonged distinctly to the lower classes, and seemed quite uneducated. He wore no clothing excepting a small loincloth, so that it would be impossible to suppose that he had somehow concealed some fruit about his person. We sat upon a flat roof with nothing but the sky above us, and yet each fruit as we asked for it was instantly thrown down among us as though it had fallen from the sky. In this way the whole of our purchase was duly delivered to us, in the order in which we called for it; and that although we were at a distance of some miles from the shop in which it had been left.

Many of the more inexplicable feats of the Indian jugglers are performed under some such arrangement as this. Any clever European juggler can deceive the eyes of the average man, and can produce results of the most wonderful nature by methods which are inexplicable to the untrained. Nevertheless there are definite limits as to what can be done in this direction; and for the production of many of the feats of the occidental conjurer a considerable amount of machinery is required, and often also a particular position or arrangement of his audience. The Oriental juggler has to work under different conditions; his performances are usually in the open air, upon the stone pavement of a courtyard, and in the midst of an excited crowd which presses closely upon him on every side. It will be seen that under circumstances such as these many of the resources of his European competitor are not available.

No doubt most men have heard of the celebrated mango trick in which a tree grows, or appears to grow, from a seed before the eyes of the spectators, and even bears fruit which is handed round and tasted. Then again there is the basket trick, in which a child is concealed under the basket and then apparently cut to pieces, though when the basket is raised it is found to be empty and the child comes running in unharmed from behind the spectators. Again we read how in some cases a rope is thrown into the air and appears to remain miraculously suspended, the conjuror himself, and usually one of his assistants, climbing up the rope and disappearing into space. Now some of these feats are manifestly impossible; and on enquiring more closely into the matter we find that the phenomena described are produced by means of what is commonly called glamour – a kind of power of wholesale mesmerism without the usual preliminaries of passes or of trance. That this is the way in which some of these tricks are performed I have myself proved by various experiments; so we need not consider any of these under our present head of invocatory magic – though it is probable that in some cases this power of glamour is exercised not by the conjuror himself, but by the unseen partner, who has at his command the various resources of the astral plane.

Many tricks on a smaller scale than the above, however, appear to be performed directly by the astral coadjutor. I recollect, for example, a little experiment of which I was a witness which I think must have belonged to this category. Once more our magician wore almost nothing in the way of clothing, and therefore could not have concealed about him any

apparatus by which his marvels could be performed. I was asked to produce a silver coin and to lay it upon the palm of my hand. I held it towards the magician, who breathed upon it but did not touch it, and then motioned me back to my seat some fifteen feet away. I was then instructed to cover this coin with my other hand, and as I did so the juggler began to mutter rapidly some incomprehensible words. Instantly I felt the sense of something exceedingly cold swelling between my hands and forcing them apart. In a moment or two this curious cold mass began to stir between my hands, and I opened them to see what was there. To my horror I found that a huge black scorpion had taken the place of the coin. Instinctively I threw him to the ground, and after erecting his tail angrily he scuttled away.

Another man present went through exactly the same performance, except that in his case as he opened his hands a small but active snake was found neatly coiled up between them. Now this was by no means a performance of the same nature as the production of a living rabbit out of one's hat by the ordinary juggler; for in this case the conjuror was some fifteen feet away, and the coin was obviously a coin and nothing else after we had withdrawn far beyond his reach. The result might have been produced by the same power of glamour to which I have previously referred; but certain circumstances connected with it make that to my mind highly improbable, and I suspect it to be a case of genuine substitution by some astral entity.

Another curious little case of the employment of this sort of traditional magic, by a man quite uneducated and ignorant of the methods by which it worked, came under my notice some years later. It happened that I had received a somewhat severe wound from which blood was pouring plentifully. A passing coolie hastily snatched a leaf from a shrub at the roadside, pressed it for a moment to the wound and muttered half a dozen words, and the flow of blood instantly ceased. Naturally I asked the man how he had done this, but he was unable or unwilling to give any satisfactory reply. All he could say was that this charm (which he was forbidden to disclose) had been handed down in his family for some generations, and his belief was that there was a spirit of some sort summoned by the charm who produced the required result. I inquired whether the leaf selected had any part in the success of his experiment, but he answered that any leaf, or a fragment of paper or cloth, would done equally well. He evidently believed that the effect was wholly due to

the form of words employed; and it may have been that it was his own confidence in this which enabled his will to produce the physical result.

In none of the cases which I have described was there anything evil or selfish about the magic employed, but I fear that there are many instances in which the work done in such ways is less innocent. Many of the witch stories of mediaeval times, and the curious tales of supposed compacts with the devil, were probably examples of the black art on a lower scale. All of this may be paralleled in certain parts of the world at the present day; and the wiseacres who dismiss all accounts of such things as merely superstitious fancy are, as usual, speaking of that which they do not in the least understand. There is, however, no need that any should be nervous with regard to such performances, or should fear that they may be injured in this way by those whose enmity they have incurred. No doubt results are produced, for example, by the Voodoo or Obeah enchantments among the Negroes; but it is rarely indeed that the practitioners are able to affect the incredulous white man.

How Evil May Be Resisted

There are cases in which this has been done; but it should be remembered that it can only happen when the evil from without finds something in the victim upon which it can act. The man whose soul is strong and unselfish cannot be touched by any such machinations. The evil thoughts and practices dictated by envy and hatred may work harm along one of two lines. They may produce fear in the victim, and so throw him into a pitiable condition, in which disease and evil of many sorts may readily descend upon him. The man who is perfectly fearless has a much greater capability of resisting all such things, precisely as the man who has no fear of contagious disease is less likely to be infected by it than the man who is always in terror of it. Any clairvoyant who watched the conditions produced both in the astral body and in the etheric part of the physical vehicle by nervousness and fear will easily understand why this should be, and will see the immunity of the fearless man is explicable on purely scientific grounds.

Another and even more deadly way in which such forces may act upon a person for evil is that they may stir up within him vibrations of the same nature as their own. So if the man has within him the seeds of envy, jealousy, hatred, sensuality, these feelings may be roused to the point of

frenzy, and he may be induced in that way to commit actions on which in his calmer moments he would look with horror. Unselfishness, one-pointedness, purity of thought guard a man entirely from such dangers, and it is therefore unnecessary that any man should be nervous with regard to the effects which may be produced upon him by others. A more real danger is that we may ourselves unconsciously yield to undesirable feelings with regard to other people, and so may, without especial intention, be causing evil results for them. That is a much more imminent peril, and one against which we can guard ourselves only by seeing to it that no thought of malice or anger, of envy or of jealousy shall for an instant be allowed to harbour itself within our hearts.

For the rest, the man who is true and unselfish gives no handle for any evil influence to seize, no door for its entrance into his heart. If his life and his thought be in harmony with the Divine Will, he may be certain that no black magician in the world can harm him. Our danger is not in the least that we shall be injured, but far more that by want of control over ourselves, our own thoughts and desires, we may sometimes do harm to others. This practical side of the subject, however, belongs more especially to our topic for next week, "The Use and Abuse of Psychic Powers."



CHAPTER 9. THE USE AND ABUSE OF PSYCHIC POWERS

Strictly speaking, psychic powers mean the powers of the soul, because this word psychic is derived from the Greek psyche, the soul. But in ordinary language this term is used rather to imply that we in Theosophy call the powers of the astral body, or even in many cases those pertaining to the etheric part of the physical body. To speak of persons as “psychic” generally means nothing more than that they are sensitive – that they sometimes see or hear more than the majority of people around them are as yet able to see or hear. Though it is of course true that this sight is a power of the soul, it is equally true that all the powers which we display in physical life are also powers of the soul, for our bodies, whether astral or physical, are after all only vehicles. What is commonly termed “psychic power” is then only a slight extension of the ordinary faculties; but the expression is also sometimes used to include other manifestations which are yet somewhat abnormal among men, such as mesmeric power, or the power of mind-cure. Since the will is the motive force both in mesmerism and in mind-cure, I presume that we can hardly object to the application of this term psychic power in these cases. Often telepathy and Psychometry are considered to come under the same head, although these in reality merely indicate a somewhat unusual sensitiveness to impressions from without. In truth, all of these powers of the soul are inherent in every son of man, though they are developed as yet only in a few, and are working only partially even with them, unless they have had the inestimable advantage of definite occult training.

The Trained and the Untrained

In my lectures upon clairvoyance I have often had to draw a distinction between the trained and the untrained man. Until we come to examine the matter practically we can have little idea what an enormous difference the definite training in the use of such powers makes to the capacity of the man. Practically all those of whom we commonly think as psychic in this occidental country are entirely untrained. They are simply persons who possess a little of this higher faculty, which has been born in them as a consequence of some efforts which they have made to attain it in past lives – possibly as vestal virgins in ancient temples, or possibly as practitioners of less desirable forms of magic in mediaeval times. In most cases in this life they have used such powers somewhat blindly, or

perhaps have made no conscious effort to use them at all, but have rather been satisfied to accept whatever impressions came to them. In India, and in other Oriental countries, these things have been scientifically studied for many centuries, so that there any one who shows signs of such development is instructed to either to repress its manifestations altogether, or else to put himself under the definite training of those who thoroughly understand the subject. The Indian mind approaches these problems from a totally different point of view. To the Hindu mere sensitiveness seems an undesirable quality, lest it should degenerate into mediumship a condition which he regards with the utmost horror. To him these powers of the soul are not in the slightest degree abnormal; he knows That they are inherent in every man, and so he is in no way surprised at their occasional manifestation. But he knows also that unless carefully trained and kept in control they are likely to mislead their possessor in the early days of his experience.

The Indian student knows what he is doing in regard to these matters, for they have all been classified thousands of years ago. There are many teachers in India who will take a man and train him psychically, just as here a man might be trained in athletics or in the practice of some science. In Eastern countries the whole thing is systematized, and all of those who are here called psychic and clairvoyant would be regarded in the East as somewhat unpromising pupils. Indeed I believe that many of the Oriental teachers would rather not undertake the development of a man who has already some small amount of these psychic powers, because it is found that such a man has usually much to unlearn, and is more difficult to manage and to train than one in whom as yet no such faculties have manifested themselves. In the East they have a thorough comprehension of all these things; with them a man is trained in the use of his faculties from the first, and the possibilities of error and miscalculation are clearly explained to him, and therefore he is naturally far less likely to fall a victim to them

In our Western countries clairvoyance has a bad reputation, by reason of the fact that there are many pretenders to its possession who are constantly unsuccessful and blundering in their efforts. There may be some of these who are barefaced impostors; but I imagine that the majority have really some partial development of this faculty, although they have often entirely misunderstood even the little that they have. Certainly no man in the East would ever come before the public, or be

known in any way as a clairvoyant, until he had been trained far enough to be beyond all possibility of the ordinary gross errors which are so painfully common among so-called clairvoyants here. When we grasp this fact, we at once see how great is the difference between the trained and the untrained, and how little reliance is usually to be placed upon the latter.

Most psychics among us feel themselves to be infallible, and consider that the messages and impressions which reach them come always from the highest possible quarters; but the truth is that a little common-sense and study of the subject would show them that in this they are mistaken. No doubt it is to some extent gratifying to each one's subtle self-conceit to suppose that she has the exclusive power of communication with some great archangel; but if she will but take the trouble to read the literature of the subject it will soon become apparent that many hundreds of other people have also had their private archangels, and have nevertheless been frequently grossly mistaken. Of course no trained man could possibly fall into such an error as this; but then, as I have said, the vast majority of our psychics in Europe and America are entirely untrained. Some of them may receive a certain amount of guidance from dead people — "spirit guides," as they are called - but it is rarely of an exact and practical kind, and it usually tends much more towards mediumship and general sensitiveness than towards the gain of definite control and self-development.

I doubt whether any large number of our occidental psychics would for a moment submit themselves to the kind of training which the wiser teachers of the East consider necessary. There a man has to try persistently patiently, over and over again at the simplest feats until he succeeds in producing his results neatly and perfectly; he is expected to build up his knowledge of higher planes step by step from those with which he is already familiar, and he is not encouraged in lofty flights which take his feet away from the bedrock of ascertained fact. Our Western psychics would probably consider themselves much injured if they were made to work laboriously at self-control in the way which is always exacted as a matter of course in all Oriental schools of development of these psychic powers.

Studies Not Definitely Psychic

I suppose that many people would include among psychic powers astrology, palmistry and phrenology. I think, however, that we are hardly justified in describing these as psychic, because in all of them the theory is that the results are obtained by deduction from matters of fact and of observation. The astrologer ascertains the position of the stars at any given moment, and from that he casts his horoscope or sets up his figure, and after that it is supposed to be a mere matter of calculation to discover what influences are at work. In the same way the palmist observes the lines of the hand and then gives his delineation according to the accepted rules of his science; and the same is done by the phrenologist from his examination of the varied configuration of the skull. In all these sciences the real proficiency lies in the capacity to balance the contradictory indications and to judge accurately between them; and many practitioners of these arts are no doubt aided in such decision by impressions which come much nearer to psychic faculty. To these last perhaps we might permit the name of psychic power, but hardly to the sciences themselves; so that I think we may put them on one side for the purpose of our lecture. It sometimes happens that one who practices these arts is in the habit of receiving impressions and communications from some astral entity — impressions which greatly assist him in judging accurately from the facts put before him. In this case obviously such success as he may attain is not in consequence of his own psychic powers, but of the additional discernment which ordinary astral faculty gives to his departed helper.

In the same way it does not seem to me that mediumship should be recognized among psychic powers, or indeed considered properly a power at all. The man who is a medium is not exercising power, but is on the contrary abdicating his rightful possession of control over his own organs or principles. It is essential for a medium that his principles should be readily separable. If he is a trance or writing medium, that means that any astral entity may easily take possession of his physical body and utilize either the hand or the vocal organs, so that he is simply one who can be promptly dispossessed by dead man. If, on the other hand, he is a materializing medium (whether the materializations are perfect and visible forms, or merely invisible hands which touch the sitters at the séance, or play musical instruments, or carry small objects about), the special quality which he possesses is that etheric or even physical matter can quickly and safely be withdrawn from his body and used for the various operations of the séance. In any or all of these cases it will be seen

that the medium's part is to be passive and not active, so that he may be seized upon and obsessed without too great an effort on the part of the obsessing entity. It is evident that he cannot be described as possessing or using a power at all, but rather as able to assume a condition in which he can without difficulty yield himself to the power of others. Conscious Psychic Powers

It would seem then that we may reserve the title of "psychic" powers for the definite use of will or of the astral or etheric senses — that is to say, we may include genuine and controlled clairvoyance, mind-cure, mesmerism, telepathy, and psychometry. A great deal of unconscious psychic power is also being constantly exercised, and of that I shall speak later; but we will take the conscious exercise of power first. This conscious exercise of these powers is only for the few among us at present. It is by no means uncommon to find men who have good deal of mesmeric capability; and a fair number of persons have considerable curative power along various lines; but still as compared to the total population these are only a few. The unconscious powers are possessed by all of us, and all of us are using them to greater or less extent,

To those who possess and employ these conscious psychic powers I would say that all of them may be used and all of them may be abused, so great care should be exercised with regard to them. There is a good general rule which is universally applicable with regard to all such matters, and that is the rule of perfect unselfishness. If those who have such powers are using them in any way for personal gain, whether it be of money or of influence, that is distinctly an abuse. These are truly powers of the soul; they are connected with the advancement of man and with his higher development, and it is for that higher development only that they should be employed. That is an important point for the person possessing them to bear in mind; it is the only safe rule that can be made for their use. These are in all cases glimpses of the future of the human race. If these higher powers which will one day come to every one of us are to be used by each man for himself, the future may well be dark and fearful. If, on the other hand, as they develop, men learn to use them for the uplifting and the helping of the race, that future will be a bright and a grand one. Our record tells us that in the remote past there was a mighty race which possessed these powers to the full; but that race as a whole used them wrongly, and in consequence that race disappeared. We of the fifth root-race must also in our turn pass through the same trial, we must

inherit the same powers. Their occasional appearance among us now is an earnest of the time when they will presently become almost universal, when they will be fully understood and accepted.

The great question is whether, having followed our predecessors so far, we shall follow them to the end; whether when we have developed these powers as they did, we also shall abuse them as they did; for if we do, it is certain that we shall also follow them in their destruction. If, as may be hoped, we shall do somewhat better than they, if there shall be a larger proportion who will use these powers for the good of mankind as a whole, it may be that the doom can be averted, and that the common-sense and public feeling of the majority will condemn and curb their employment for selfish purposes. But if that is to be, if we are to have this larger proportion of those who understand and who use their powers intelligently, it is certain that we must begin now; now that these things are as yet only in seed among us we must begin by using them unselfishly, and we must put away altogether the idea of exploiting them for the sake of the lower self. There is already far too great a tendency in This direction; the grasping avarice of the ignorant leads them to employ every additional advantage which they think they can gain, in order that they may make a little more money, that they may obtain a little more advancement or a little more fame for the wretched personal self.

The dawn of these higher faculties must never be corrupted by such thoughts or such feelings as these. We must remember that higher powers involve higher responsibility, that the man who possesses them is already in a different position, because he is already coming within reach of grander possibilities in many directions. We understand this readily in other and more purely physical matters, and none of us would think of regarding the responsibility of the savage when he commits a murder or a robbery as in any way equal to our own if we should fall into the same crime. That is because we have a greater knowledge than he, and so every one instinctively realizes that more is to be expected from us. The same thing is true with regard to this additional knowledge — this knowledge that brings with it so much more of power; for added power means added opportunity, and therefore added responsibility.

Mesmerism and Mind-Cure

In previous lectures I have already explained the Theosophical view with regard to mesmerism and mind-cure, so I need not now repeat myself with regard to these subjects. It is easy to see how the former might be misused — how it might be employed with great facility to dominate the mind of a person and to influence him unduly to favour the operator. One hears sometimes of such cases, in which a man desiring to obtain a position, of another one desiring to obtain money, exercises undue mesmeric influence and thereby gets himself appointed to some place which he is unfitted to fill, or perhaps succeeds in having money given to him or left to him as a legacy when it should by ordinary canons of justice have passed into other hands. It is common to see advertisements in the papers from men who profess to teach mesmeric influence avowedly with the intention that it shall be used in ordinary business, in order that the person who uses it may in this way get the better of the unfortunate man who comes into contact with him in the way of It is obvious that all these are very serious abuses; and I think that we must class 'with them that use of mesmeric power which is so frequently exhibited in public - that which makes the subject ridiculous in some one or other of many ways. On the other hand, there is no doubt that mesmerism may be usefully employed for curative purposes. As I explained in my lecture on that subject, it is usually possible to withdraw from a patient such pains as those of headache or toothache by means of a few passes, without putting him into a trance condition at all. Indeed I imagine that a large number of ills to which flesh is heir can be cured in this way without the use of trance. This latter should be used very sparingly, because it involves domination of one man's will by another; perhaps almost the only case in which it is justifiable is that of a surgical operation. We shall find accounts of its successful employment in such cases in the works of Dr. Esdaile of Calcutta and Dr. Elliotson of London. One may see equally readily how easy it would be to misuse the power of mind-cure. It is often employed as a means of making money; and it seems to me that wherever that is done there is a terrible danger of impurity in the motive and unscrupulousness in the practice. It is sometimes said that those who devote the whole of their time and strength to the curing of others must themselves obtain their livelihood in some way, and that in this respect mind-cure stands only on the same level as ordinary medicine. I do not feel myself able to agree with this latter contention. In the case of the ordinary doctor we all know that he passed through an expensive training in order to fit himself to deal with the especial needs of the human body; and we all realize what it is that we are buying from him

— the services which his skill and experience enable him to place at our disposal. But the mind-curist is often entirely ignorant, and has undergone no preliminary training; in any case he is using a power which cannot be measured upon the physical plane, because it belongs to something higher and less material. If such a practitioner has no means of his own, and is devoting the whole of his time to the work of curing diseases, there can be no objection to his accepting any gift that a grateful patient may wish to make to him in recognition of the help which he has given; but it seems to me that to fix a definite charge for services of this nature is eminently undesirable and contrary to the whole spirit of occult teaching. This is a matter which every person must decide with his own conscience; but it is a dangerous thing to introduce any element of personal gain into the utilization of powers which belong to these higher levels. It is better to avoid in this case the very appearance of evil.

Clairvoyance

All this is true also of clairvoyance. Any faculty of that nature which a person possesses may be used for good in a great many ways. For one who has this faculty higher worlds lie partially open, at any rate sometimes, and therefore this power may be used to learn. For this purpose it is necessary that the clairvoyant should make a careful study of the literature of the subject, in order that he may see what others possessing this faculty have previously learnt, that he may be guided by their experience, and may avoid the pitfalls into which some of them have fallen. A clairvoyant who does not study the subject, who makes no effort to verify his visions and to compare them with the experiences of others, is liable to be seriously deceived, and by his wild predictions and descriptions to bring the whole subject into discredit with those who do not yet understand it. But for one who uses this power with common-sense and without self-conceit, in a scientific spirit of investigation rather than with the hope of obtaining personal gain from it, it may be a source not only of great pleasure but also of great advancement. Not only may he obtain knowledge for himself — knowledge which he can pass on to his fellow-men — but by its means he may also learn to see when and how people need help, and to distinguish the way in which it can most successfully be given. By its means he can often see where a kind word is especially needed, where a loving, comforting, strengthening thought can be sent with the certainty of immediate result. The clairvoyant has at least a little more power for good than his fellows if he will only watch for

opportunities for using it, if only he will think always of helping others rather than of gaining anything for himself. Beautiful possibilities open up before us when we think of the power that will be in the hands of all in the not-far-distant future; the man who is to some extent clairvoyant now is beginning even already to reap a little of the harvest of capacity for good which will come to us all as the race advances. The clairvoyant who is thoroughly unselfish, whose additional powers are carefully balanced by strong and robust common-sense, may do much good in the world, and may gain spiritual advancement for himself in the very act of helping his fellow-creatures.

It is not difficult to see that this is a power that may be misused. The additional information about others which it puts in the hands of its possessor may be employed, and unfortunately is sometimes employed, for personal gain, for the gratification of curiosity and even for the levying of blackmail. We see from this how essentially necessary it is that the clairvoyant should possess the characteristic of a gentleman, and when he belongs to the class which in Theosophy we call the first class pitri this is of course the case.

Scandalous Misuse of It

Unfortunately clairvoyance may be acquired by less developed souls who do not possess the instincts of the man of delicate feeling, as we may see by some of the disgraceful advertisements which so frequently appear in our papers. There we see persons shamelessly announcing that they are prepared to put clairvoyant power (such as it is) at any man's disposal in order to help him to obtain an unfair advantage over his fellows in some speculation, that they will help him to rob other men under the pretext of gambling or of betting on horse racing. In this way they are pandering to the lowest passions of man, they are descending from what should be a higher and purer realm into the foulest mud of the most degraded physical life.

Nor are these the only offenders, for we often see announcements from those who profess to teach clairvoyance or occult science of some sort in return for so many pounds or so many dollars. These unscrupulous practitioners are able to live and flourish only because the public is as yet ignorant of the true conditions of all such teaching. It is certain that no true occultist has ever yet taken money for occult teaching or

information. The moment That a man advertises — the moment that he takes money for any service which professes to be of an occult nature — that moment he brands himself as having no true occultism to give. True teaching along these lines is to be obtained only from recognized schools of occultism existing under the guardianship of the great Brotherhood; and every pupil of these is forbidden to take money for the use of any psychic power. So all these people condemn themselves, and bear this condemnation on the very face of their announcements; and if they flourish and grow fat upon the property of Those whom they deceive, the sufferers have only themselves to thank for the results of their own foolish credulity. Once more I repeat that there is one, and only one, safe rule with regard to the use of all these higher faculties, and that is that. They shall never under any conditions be employed for any selfish or personal object.

Let us turn now from these powers which belong only to the few to those others which all of us possess and are using, even though we may be unconscious of them. The first and the greatest of these is the power of thought. Many a man has heard vaguely that thoughts are things, and yet the statement has not conveyed to him. Any real or definite meaning. When he is fortunate enough to have developed clairvoyance to the level of the mental plane, he will be able to bear testimony to the enormous importance of the truth which is expressed in that statement. If, utilizing the senses of the mental body, he looks out through them at the mental bodies of his fellows, he will see how thought manifests itself at that level and what results it produces. It is in the mental body or mind of man that thought first shows itself to clairvoyant vision as a vibration arising in the matter of that body. From the plates which I have published in *Man visible and Invisible* some idea may be gathered of the appearance of this mental body to the man who is able to see it; though the drawings given in that book are only an attempt to present in section and on the physical plane something of the far grander and wider impression which is really made on the sense at that higher level by the appearance of that body.

We man thinks while a clairvoyant is watching him, the latter will see that a vibration is set up in the mental body, and that this vibration produces two distinct results. Like all other vibrations, it tends to communicate itself to any surrounding matter which is capable of receiving it; and thus, since the atmosphere is filled with mental matter, which is readily set in motion in response to any such impulse, the first effect produced is that

of a sort of ripple which spreads out through circumjacent space, exactly as when a stone is thrown into a pond ripples will be seen to radiate from that centre along the surface of the water. In this case the radiation is not in one plane but in all directions, like the radiations from the sun or from a lamp. It must be remembered that man exists in a great sea of mental matter, just as we here on the physical plane are living in the midst of the atmosphere, although we so rarely think of it. This thought-vibration, therefore, radiates out in all directions, becoming less powerful in proportion to the distance from its source. Again, like all other vibrations, this one tends to reproduce itself wherever opportunity is offered to it; and as each variety of thought is represented by its own rate of vibration, that fact means that whenever this wave strikes upon another mental body it will tend to provoke in it vibrations similar to those which gave it birth in the first place. That is to say, from the point of view of that other man whose mental body is touched by the wave, it tends to produce in his mind a thought identical with that which had previously arisen in the mind of The thinker.

The distance to which such a thought-wave penetrates, the strength and persistence with which it impinges upon the mental bodies of others, depend upon the strength and clearness of the original thought. The voice of a speaker sets in motion waves of sound in the air, which radiate from him in all directions, and convey his message to all those who are, as we say, within hearing; and the distance to which his voice can penetrate depends upon its strength and the clearness of his enunciation. In the same way the strong thought will carry further than the weak and undecided one; but clearness and definiteness are of even greater importance than strength. But just as the speaker's voice may fall upon heedless ears where men are already engaged in business or in pleasure, so may a strong wave of thought sweep past without affecting the mind of man if he is already deeply engrossed in some other line of thought. Large numbers of men, however, do not think definitely or strongly except when in the immediate prosecution of some business which demands their whole attention. Consequently there are always many minds within our reach which are likely to be considerably affected by the thoughts which impinge upon them; and we therefore are responsible for the thoughts which we send out and for the effects which they produce upon others.

This is a psychic power which we all possess, which we are constantly exercising; and yet how few of us ever think of it, or of the serious responsibility which it involves. Inevitably and without any effort of ours every thought which we allow to rest within our minds must be influencing the minds of others about us. Consider how frightful is the responsibility if this thought be an impure or an evil one, for we are then spreading moral contagion among our fellow men. Remember that thousands of people possess within them latent germs of evil — germs which may never blossom and bear fruit unless some force from without plays upon them and stirs them into activity. If you yield yourself to an impure or unholy thought, the vibration which you thus produce may be the factor which awakens a germ into activity and causes it to begin to grow; and so you may start some soul upon a downward career. Later it may blossom out into thoughts and words and deeds of evil, and these in their turn may injuriously affect thousands of other men even in the far-distant future. We see then how awful is the responsibility of a single evil thought. Harm is constantly done in this way, and though it is done unconsciously, a heavy responsibility lies upon the doer, for at least he knows that he ought to have purified his mind but has neglected to do so.

If it should ever happen to us to have a selfish or evil thought arising within us, let us hasten at once to send out a strong and vital thought of goodness and charity to follow hard upon the other vibration and, so far as may be, undo any evil which it may have done. Happily all this is true of good thought as well as of evil; and the man who realizes this may set himself to work to be a veritable sun, constantly radiating upon all his neighbours thoughts of love and calm and peace. This is a grand psychic power, and yet it is one that is within the reach of every human being — of the poorest as well as the wealthiest, of the little child as well as of the great sage. How clearly this consideration shows us the duty of controlling our thought and of keeping it always at the highest level which is possible for us!

Thought-Forms

That, however, is only of the results of thought. Our clairvoyant watching the genesis of this thought sees that it not only sets up this ever-radiating and divergent vibration, but that it also makes a definite form. All students of Theosophy are acquainted with the idea of the elemental essence — that strange half-intelligent life which surrounds us; they know

how readily it responds to the influence of human thought, and how every impulse sent out from the mind-body of man immediately clothes itself in a temporary vehicle of this essence. Thus it becomes for the time being a kind of living creature, the thought-force being the soul and the elemental essence the body. There may be infinite variety in the colour and shape of such thought-forms — artificial elementals, as they are sometimes called. Each thought draws round it the matter which is appropriate for its expression and sets that matter into vibration in harmony with its own; thus the character of the thought decides its colour, and the study of its variations and combinations is an exceedingly interesting one. A list of these colours with their signification is given in the book which I have just mentioned, *Man Visible and Invisible*, and a number of coloured drawings of various types of such forms will be found in the companion volume *Thought-Forms*.

In many cases these thoughts are merely revolving clouds of the colour appropriate to the idea which gave them birth but in the case of a definite form, a clear-cut and often beautiful shape will be assumed. If the thought be intellectual and impersonal — for example if the thinker is attempting to solve a problem in algebra or geometry — then his thought-forms and waves of vibration will be confined to the mental plane. If, however, his thought be of a spiritual nature, if it be tinged with love and aspiration of deep unselfish feeling, then it will rise upwards from the mental plane and will borrow much of the splendour and glory of the buddhic levels above. In such a case its influence is most powerful, and every such thought is a mighty force for good which cannot but produce a decided effect upon all other mental bodies within reach, if they contain any quality at all capable of response.

If, on the other hand, the thought has in it something of self or of personal desire, at once its vibrations turn downward, and it draws round itself a body of astral matter in addition to its clothing of mental matter. Such a thought-form is capable of acting upon not only the minds but the astral bodies of other men - capable not only of arousing thought within them, but also stirring up their feelings. Here once more we see the terrible responsibility of sending forth a selfish thought, or one charged with low and evil magnetism. If any man about us has a weak spot within his nature - and who has not? - then this selfish thought of ours may find that weak spot and develop the germ of evil into poisonous flower and fruit. But good and loving thoughts and feelings will project their forms

also, and will act upon other men just as strongly in their way as did the evil in the contrary direction; so that this opens before us a sphere of usefulness, when once our thoughts and feelings are thoroughly under the control of the higher self

The Work of the Thought-Form

It may be useful for us to think a little more closely of this thought-form, and to note its further adventures. Often a man's thought is definitely directed toward some one else; he sends forth from himself a thought of affection, of gratitude, or unfortunately it may sometimes be of envy or jealousy or of hatred, towards some one else. Such a thought will produce its radiations precisely as would any other; but the thought-form which it generates is imbued with definite intention, as it were, and as soon as it breaks away from the mental and astral bodies of the thinker it goes straight towards the person upon whom it is directed, and fastens itself upon him. It may be compared not inaptly to a Leyden jar, with its charge of electricity. If the man towards whom it is directed is at the moment in a passive condition, or if he has within him active vibrations of a character harmonious with its own, it will at once discharge itself upon him. Its effect will be to provoke a vibration similar to its own if none such already exists, or to intensify it if it is already to be found there. If the man's mind is so strongly occupied along some other lines that it is impossible for the vibration to find an entrance, the thought-form hovers about him waiting for an opportunity to discharge itself. Unfortunately, however, at our present stage of evolution the majority of the thoughts of men are usually self-centred, even when not actively selfish. They are often heavily tinged by desire, and in such cases they at once descend into and clothe themselves with astral matter, and react strongly and persistently upon the man who set them in motion.

Many a man may be seen surrounded by a shell of thought-forms, all of them hovering closely about him and constantly reacting upon him. Their tendency in such a case is to reproduce themselves — that is to say, to stir up in him a repetition of the thoughts to which he has previously yielded himself. Many a man feels this pressure upon him from without — this constant suggestion of certain thoughts; and if the thoughts are evil he frequently thinks of them as tempting demons goading him into sin. Yet they are none the less entirely his own creation, and thus, as ever, man is his own tempter.

Helpful Thought

Note, on the other hand, the happiness which this knowledge brings to us and the enormous power which it places in our hands. See how we can utilize this when we know (and who does not?) of some one who is in sorrow or in suffering. We may not be able to do anything for the man on the physical plane; there are often many reasons which prevent the giving of physical help, no matter how much we may desire to do our best. Circumstances often arise in which our physical presence may not be helpful to the man whom we wish to aid; his physical brain may be closed to our suggestions by prejudice or by religious bigotry. But his astral and mental bodies are more sensitive, more easily impressible; and it is always open to us to approach these by waves of helpful thought or of affectionate and soothing feeling. Remember that it is certain that the results must accrue; there is no possibility of failure in such an effort or endeavour to help, even though no obvious consequences may follow on the physical plan.

The law of the conservation of energy holds good at this level as it does in our terrestrial mechanics, and the energy we pour forth must reach its goal and must produce its effect. There can be no question that the image which we wish to put before our friend for his comfort or his help will reach him; whether it will present itself clearly to his mind when it arrives depends first upon the definiteness of outline which we have been able to give to it, and secondly upon his mental condition at the time. He may be so fully occupied with thoughts of his own trials and sufferings that there is little room for any new idea to insinuate itself, but in that case our thought simply bides its time, and when at last his attention is diverted, or exhaustion forces him to suspend the activity of his own train of thought, assuredly ours will slip in and will do its errand of mercy. The same thing is true at its different level of the strong feeling of affection and friendliness which we send out towards a person thus suffering; it may be that at the moment he is too much occupied with his own feelings, or perhaps too much excited to receive and accept any suggestion from without, but presently a time comes when the faithful thought-form can penetrate and discharge itself, and then our sympathy will produce its due result. There are so many cases where the best will in the world can do nothing on the physical plane; but there is no conceivable case in which either on the mental or the astral plane some relief cannot be given by steady concentrated loving thought.

The phenomena of mental cure show how powerful thought may be even on the physical plane, and since it acts so much more easily on the astral and the mental we may realize how tremendous a power is ours if we will but exercise it. Let us remember always to think of a person as we wish him to be; the image we thus make of him will act powerfully upon him and tend to draw him gradually into harmony with itself. Let us fix our thoughts upon the good qualities of our friends, because in thinking of any quality we tend to strengthen its vibrations and therefore to intensify it. It can never be right to endeavour to dominate the thought and will of another, even though it may be for what seems a good end; but it is always right to hold up before a man a high ideal of himself, and to wish strongly that he may presently be enabled to attain it. In this way our steady train of thought will always act upon those whom we love; and we should remember that at the same time it is acting upon ourselves also, and we can utilize it to train thought-power within ourselves so that it will become ever stronger and more definite. If we know of certain defects or vices in a man's character, let us send to him strong thoughts of the contrary virtues, so that these may by degrees be built into his character.

Never under any circumstances should we dwell upon that which is evil in him, for in that case our thought would tend to intensify that evil.

That is the horrible wickedness of gossip and of scandal, for there we have a number of people fixing their thought upon the evil qualities of another, calling to that evil the attention of others who might otherwise not have observed it; and in this way, if the evil already exists, their folly increases it, and if, as is often the case, it does not exist, they are doing their best to produce it. When we reach a more enlightened state of society people will learn to focus their connected thought upon others for good instead of for evil; if a man suffers from the domination of a vice, they will endeavour to realize strongly the opposite virtue, and then send out waves of that thought toward him; they will think of his good points and try by concentrating attention upon them to strengthen him and help him through them; their criticism will be of that happy kind which grasps at a pearl as eagerly as our modern criticism pounces upon an imaginary flaw.

Sensitiveness

There is another psychic quality which all of us possess in some degree, and that is the quality of sensitiveness to impressions. We all receive these impressions at times. As yet they are imperfect and by no means always reliable, but nevertheless they may be noted and watched carefully, and used as training towards the development of a more perfect faculty. Many a time they may be useful to us in telling us where help is needed, where a loving thought or word is required. When we see a person we may sometimes feel radiating from him the influence of deep depression. If we remember the illustration in *Man Visible and Invisible* of the man who was under the influence of depression we shall recollect how he seemed shut in by it, almost as effectively as the miser was shut in by his prison house of self-centred thought. Those who recollect that impressive picture will at once see what it is that thought can do for this man. It can strengthen his vibrations and help him to break these prison-bars, to throw off their terrible weight and to release himself from the heavy cloud that surrounds him. If we receive the impression of depression from him, we may be sure that there is some reason for it, and that this is an opportunity for us. Since man is in truth a spark of the Divine, there must always be that within him which will respond to our calm loving thought, and so he may be reassured and helped. Let us try to put before him strongly the feeling that in spite of his personal sorrows and troubles the sun still shines above all, and there is still much for which he ought to be thankful, much that is good and beautiful in the world. Often we shall see the change that is produced, and this will encourage us to try again, for we shall learn that we are utilizing these psychic powers which we possess - first our sensitiveness in discovering what is wrong, and then our thought in order to help to put it right.

Yet this difficulty of sensitiveness also may be misused. A case in point would be if we allowed ourselves to be depressed, either by our own sorrows and sufferings, or by coming in contact with depression in others. The man who is sensitive will often meet with much that is unpleasant to him, especially if his lot is cast in a great city or in the midst of what is called modern civilization; yet he should remember that it is emphatically his duty to be happy, and to resist all thoughts of gloom or of despair. He should try his best to imitate on the higher planes the action on the physical plane of the sun which is so glorious a symbol of the Logos. Just as that pours out its light and life, so should he try to hold a steady calm serene centre through which the grace and the power from on high may be poured out upon his fellow man. In this way he may become in very

truth a fellow-worker with Clod, for through him and through his reflection of it this divine grace and strength may affect many whom directly it could not reach.

The physical sun floods down its life and light upon us, yet there may easily be caverns or cellars into which that light cannot penetrate directly; but a mirror which is upon the earth and upon the level of the cavern or the cellar may so reflect these glorious rays that they may reach to the innermost extremity and dispel the gloom and darkness. Just so it sometimes happens that man may make himself into a mirror for the divine glory, and that through him it may manifest to those whose eyes would otherwise remain blind to its shining. Trouble and sorrow come at times to us all, but we must not selfishly yield ourselves to them, for if we do we shall inevitably endanger others; we shall radiate depression around us and intensify it among our friends. There is always enough sorrow and worry in the world; we must not therefore selfishly add to it by mourning over our own share of the trouble and the sorrow, but rather range ourselves on the side of God, who means man to be happy. Let us strive to throw off the depression from ourselves, so that we may radiate at least resignation and calmness, even if we cannot attain to the height of positive joyousness. Along this line also there is a great and splendid work for every one of us to do, and it lies close to our hands if we will but raise them to undertake it.

Another way in which it is possible for us to misuse this qualification of sensitiveness is to allow ourselves to be so repelled by the undesirable qualities which we sense in men whom we meet, that we are unable to help them when an opportunity is offered to us. Every good and pure person feels a strong sense of instinctive repulsion from that which is coarse and evil; and from this fact a good deal of misapprehension has arisen, If we meet some one coarse and vulgar we shall feel that sense of repulsion; but we must not therefore conclude that every time we feel it we have necessarily met with that which is terribly evil.

Inharmonious Vibrations

If we regard the matter simply from the material level, the reason for the strong repulsion between the high-minded man and the man whose thoughts and feelings are selfish is simply that their vibrations are discordant. Each of them has within his astral body something at least of

the matter of all the levels of the astral plane; but they have used it very differently. The good man has persistently developed the finer type of vibrations which work most readily in the highest types of astral matter, whereas the man of selfish thought has scarcely utilized that part of his astral body at all, and has strengthened and intensified within himself such vibrations as belong especially to the grosser type of matter. Consequently when these two come together their vibrations are inharmonious and produce a strong sense of discord and discomfort. So they instinctively avoid one another, and it is only when the good man has learnt of his duty and his power to help that he feels it incumbent upon him to try, even though it be from a distance, to influence his inharmonious brother.

We have, however, to remember that two persons who are in every way equally good and equally developed may nevertheless be far from harmonious. Although the difference between them may not be so extreme as that which we have instances, it may nevertheless be sufficient to produce a sense of in harmony and therefore of repulsion. It is by no means safe to decide that, when we feel a distaste for the society of a certain person, that person is necessarily wicked. This mistake has so often been made by good and well-meaning people that it is worth while to emphasize this matter somewhat strongly. It is true that such a feeling when decided does indicate a degree of in harmony which makes it difficult to help that person along ordinary tines, just as when we feel at first sight a strong attraction to some one, we may take it as an indication that here is one to whom we can be useful, one who will readily absorb from us and learn from us. But nevertheless it is also possible for us to overcome the feeling of repulsion, and where there is no one else to give the needed help it of course becomes our duty to do so.

All, then, should try to realize these psychic powers which they already possess, and realizing them should determine to use them wisely and well. It is true that the responsibility is great, yet let us not shrink from them on that account. If many are unconsciously using these things for evil, all the more is it necessary that we who are beginning to understand a little should use them consciously and for good. Let us then welcome all such powers gladly, yet never forget to balance them with careful study and with sound common-sense. In that way we shall avoid all danger of misusing them; in that way we shall prepare ourselves to use other and greater powers as they come to us in the course of our evolution — to use

them always for the furtherance of the great Divine Scheme and for the helping of our fellowman.



CHAPTER 10. VEGETARIANISM AND OCCULTISM

In speaking of the relation between vegetarianism and occultism, it may be well for us to begin by defining our terms, as we have generally done on other occasions. We all know what is meant by vegetarianism; and although there are several varieties of it, it will not be necessary to discuss them. The vegetarian is one who abstains from eating flesh-food. There are some of them who admit such animal products as are obtained without destroying the life of the animal, as, for example, milk, butter, and cheese. There are others who restrict themselves to certain varieties of the vegetable — to fruit and nuts, perhaps; there are others who prefer to take only such food as can be eaten uncooked; others will take no food which grows underground, such as potatoes, turnips, carrots, etc. We need not concern ourselves with these divisions, but simply define the vegetarian as one who abstains from any food which is obtained by the slaughter of animals — of course including birds and fish.

How shall we define occultism? The word is derived from the Latin *occultus*, hidden; so that it is the study of the hidden laws of nature. Since all the great laws of nature are in fact working in the invisible world far more than in the visible, occultism involves the acceptance of a much wider view of nature than that which is ordinarily taken. The occultist, then is a man who studies all the laws of nature that he can reach or of which he can hear, and as a result of his study he identifies himself with these laws and devotes his life to the service of evolution. How does occultism regard vegetarianism? It regard it very favourably, and that for many reasons. These reasons may be divided into two classes — those which are ordinary and physical, and those which are occult or hidden. There are many reasons in favour of vegetarianism which are down here on the physical plane and patent to the eyes of any one who will take the trouble to examine the subject; and these will operate with the occult student even more strongly than with the ordinary man. In addition to these and altogether beyond them, the occult student knows of other reasons which come from the study of those hidden laws which are as yet so little understood by the majority of mankind. We must therefore divide our consideration of these reasons into these two parts, first taking the ordinary and physical.

Selfish Reasons in Favour of Decent Food

Even these ordinary reasons themselves be subdivided into two classes, the first containing those which are physical and as it were selfish, and secondly those which may be described as the moral and unselfish considerations. First, then, let us take the reasons in favour of vegetarianism which concern only the man himself, and are purely upon the physical plane. For the moment we will put aside the consideration of the effect upon others which is so infinitely more important, and think only of the results for the man himself. It is necessary to do this because one of the objections frequently brought against vegetarianism is that it is a beautiful theory, but one the working of which is impracticable, since it is supposed that a man cannot live without devouring dead fish. The objection is irrational and is founded upon ignorance or perversion of facts, I am myself an example of its falsity; for I have lived without the pollution of flesh food — without fish, fowl, or eggs — for the last twenty-seven years, and not only still survive, but have been during all that time in remarkably good health. Nor am I in any way peculiar in this, for I know some thousands of others who have done the same thing. I know some younger ones who have been so happy as to be unpolluted by the eating of flesh during the whole of their lives; and they are distinctly freer from disease than those who partake of such things. Assuredly there are many reasons in favour of vegetarianism from the purely selfish point of view; and I put that first because I know that the selfish considerations will appeal most strongly to a majority of people, though I hope that in the case of those who are studying Theosophy we may assume that the moral considerations which I shall later adduce will sway them far more forcibly.

We Want the Best

I take it that in food, as well as in everything else, we all of us want the best that is within our means. We should like to bring our lives, and therefore our daily food as a not unimportant part of our lives, into harmony with our aspirations, into harmony with the highest that we know. We should be glad to take what is really best; and if we do not yet know enough to be able to appreciate what is best, then we should be glad to learn to do so. If we think of it we shall see that this is the case along other lines, as, for example, in music, or in art, or in literature. We have been taught from childhood that if we want our musical taste developed along the best lines we must select only the best music, and if at first we do not fully appreciate or understand it, we must be willing patiently to wait and to listen until at length something of its sweet

beauty dawns upon our souls, and we come to comprehend that which at first awakened no response within our hearts. If we want to appreciate the best in art we must not fill our eyes with the sensational broadsheets of police news, or with the hideous abominations which are miscalled "comic pictures," but we must steadily look and learn until the mystery of the work of Turner begins to unfold to our patient contemplation, or the grand breadth of Velasquez comes within our power to understand. So too in literature. It has been the sad experience of many that much of the best and the most beautiful is lost to those whose mental food consists exclusively of the sensational paper or the cheap novel, or of that frothy mass of waste material which is thrown up like scum upon the molten metal of life — novelettes, serials, and fragments, of a type which neither teach the ignorant, nor strengthen the weak, nor develop the immature. If we wish to unfold the mind in our children we do not leave them to their own uncultivated taste in all these things, but we try to help them to train that taste, whether it be in art, in music, or in literature.

Surely then we may seek to find the best in physical as well as in mental food, and surely we must find this not by mere blind instinct, but by learning to think and to reason out the matter from the higher point of view. There may be those in the world who have no desire for the best, who are willing to remain on the lower levels and consciously and intentionally to build into themselves that which is coarse and degrading; but surely there are many who wish to rise above this, many who would gladly and eagerly take the best if they only knew what it was, or if their attention was directed to it.

There are men and women who are morally of the highest class who yet have been brought up to feed with the hyenas and the wolves of life, and have been taught that their necessary dietary ~s the corpse of a slaughtered animal. It needs but little thought to show us that this horror cannot be the highest and the purest, and that if we ever wish to raise ourselves in the scale of nature, if we ever wish that our bodies shall be pure and clean as the temples of the Master should be, we must abandon this loathsome custom, and take our place among the princely hosts who are striving for the evolution of mankind - striving for the highest and the purest in everything, for themselves as well as for their fellowmen. Let us see in detail why a vegetarian diet is emphatically the purest and the best.

First: Because vegetables contain more nutriment than an equal amount of dead flesh. This will sound a surprising and incredible statement to many people, because they have been brought up to believe that they cannot exist unless they defile themselves with flesh, and this delusion is so widely spread that it is difficult to awaken the average man from it. It must be clearly understood that this is not a question of habit, or of sentiment, or of prejudice; it is simply a question of plain fact, and as to the facts there is not and there never has been the slightest question. There are four elements necessary in food, all of them essential to the repair and the upbuilding of the body. (a) Proteids or nitrogenous foods; (b) carbohydrates; (c) hydrocarbons or fats; (d) salts. This is the classification usually accepted among physiologists, although some recent investigations are tending to modify it to a certain extent. Now there is no question that all of these elements exist to a greater extent in vegetables than they do in dead flesh. For instance, milk, cream, cheese, nuts, peas, and beans contain a large percentage of proteids or nitrogenous matter. Wheat, oats, rice and other grains, fruits and most of the vegetables (except perhaps peas, beans, and lentils) consist mainly of the carbohydrates — that is, of starches and sugars. The hydrocarbons, or fats, are found in nearly all the proteid foods, and can also be taken in the form of butter or of oils. The salts are found practically in all foods to a greater or less extent. They are of the utmost importance in the maintenance of the body tissues, and what is called saline starvation is the cause of many diseases.

It is sometimes claimed that flesh-meat contains some of these things to a larger degree than vegetables, and some tables are drawn up in such a way as to suggest this; but once more this is a question of facts, and must be faced from that point of view. The only sources of energy in dead flesh are the proteid matter contained therein, and the fat; and as the fat in it has certainly no more value than other fat, the only point to be considered is the proteids. Now it must be remembered that proteids have only one origin; they are organized in plants and nowhere else. Nuts, peas, beans, and lentils are far richer than any kind of flesh in these elements, and they have this enormous advantage, that the proteids are pure, and therefore contain all the energy originally stored up in them during their organization. In the animal body these proteids, which the animal has absorbed from the vegetable kingdom during his life, are constantly passing down to disorganization, during which descent the energy originally stored in them is released. Consequently what has been

used already by one animal cannot be utilized by another. The proteids are estimated in some of these tables by the amount of nitrogen contained therein, but in flesh meat there are many products of tissue-change such as urea, uric acid, and creatin, all of which contain nitrogen and are therefore estimated as proteids, though they have no food value whatever

Nor is this all the evil; for this tissue-change is necessarily accompanied by the formation of various poisons, which are always to be found in flesh of any kind, and in many cases the virulence of these poisons is very great. So you will observe that if you gain any nourishment from the eating of dead flesh, you obtain it because during his life the animal consumed vegetable matter. You get less of this nourishment than you ought to have, because the animal has already used up half of it, and you have along with it various undesirable substances, and even some active poisons, which are of course distinctly deleterious. I know that there are many doctors who will prescribe the loathsome flesh diet in order to strengthen people, and that they will often meet with a certain amount of success; though even on this point they are by no means agreed, for Dr. Milner Fothergill writes: "All the bloodshed caused by the warlike disposition of Napoleon is as nothing compared to the loss of life among the myriads of persons who have sunk into their graves through a misplaced confidence in the supposed value of beef-tea." At any rate the strengthening results can be obtained more easily from the vegetable kingdom when the science of diet is properly understood, and they can be obtained without the horrible pollution and without all the undesirable concomitants of the other system- Let me show you that I am not in all this making any unfounded assertions; let me quote to you the opinions of physicians, of men whose names are well known in the medical world, so that you may see that I have abundant authority for all that I have said.

We find Sir Henry Thompson, F.R.C.S saying: "It is a vulgar error to regard meat in any form as necessary to life. All that is necessary to the human body can be supplied by the vegetable kingdom.. The vegetarian can extract from his food all the principles necessary for the growth and the support of the body, as well as for the production of heat and force. It must be admitted as a fact beyond all question that some persons are stronger and more healthy who live on that food. I know how much of the prevailing meat diet is not merely a wasteful extravagance, but a source

of serious evil to The consumer.” There is a definite statement by a well-known medical man.

Then we may turn to the words of a Fellow of the Royal Society, Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, M.D; he says; “It must be honestly admitted that weight by weight vegetable substance, when carefully selected possesses the most striking advantages over animal food in nutritious value. ..I should like to see a vegetarian and fruit-living plan put into general use, and I believe it will be.”

The well-known physician, Dr. William. S. Playfair, C.B., Has said quite clearly, “Animal diet is not essential to man”; and we find Dr. F.J. Sytes, B.SC., The Medical Official for St. Pancras, writing: “Chemistry is not antagonistic to vegetarianism, any more than biology is. Flesh-food is certainly not necessary to supply the nitrogenous products required for the repair of tissues, therefore a well-selected diet from the vegetable kingdom is perfectly right, from the chemical point of view, for the nutrition of men-” Dr. Francis Vacher, F.R.C.S., F.C.S, remarks, “I have no belief that a man is better physically or mentally for taking flesh-food.”

Dr. Alexander Haig, F.R.C.P., The leading physician of one of the great London hospitals, had written, “That it is easily possible to sustain life on the products of the vegetable kingdom needs no demonstration for physiologists, even if the majority of the human race were not constantly engaged in demonstrating it; and my researches show, not only that it is possible, but that it is infinitely preferable in every way, and produces superior power both of mind and body.”

Dr. MY. Coomes, in The American Practitioner and News of July, 1902, concluded a scientific article as follows: “Let me state first that the flesh of warm-blooded animals is not essential as a diet for the purpose of maintaining the human body in perfect health.” He goes on to make some farther remarks which we shall quote under our next head.

The Dean of the Faculty of Jefferson Medical College (of Philadelphia) said: “It is a well-known fact that cereals as articles of daily food hold a high place in the human economy; they contain constituents amply sufficient to sustain life in its highest form. If the value of cereal food products were better known it would be a good thing for the race. Nations live and thrive upon them alone, and it has been fully

demonstrated that meat is not a necessity. There you have a number of plain statements, and all of them are taken from the writings of well-known men who have made a considerable study of the chemistry of foods. It is impossible to deny that man can exist without this horrible diet, and furthermore that there is more nutriment in an equal amount of vegetable than of dead flesh. I could give you many other quotations, but those above mentioned are sufficient, and they are fair samples of the rest. 2 Less Disease

Second: Because many serious diseases come from this loathsome habit of devouring dead bodies. Here again I could easily give you a long list of quotations, but as before I will be satisfied with a few. Dr. Josiah Oldfield, R.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Writes: "Flesh is an unnatural food, and therefore tends to create functional disturbances. As it is taken in modern civilizations, it is infected with such terrible diseases (readily communicable to man) as cancer, consumption, fever, intestinal worms, etc., to an enormous extent. There is little need to wonder that flesh-eating is one of the most serious causes of the diseases that carry off ninety-nine out of every hundred people that are born.

Sir Edward Saunders tells us: "Any attempt to teach mankind that beef and beer are not necessary for health and efficiency must be good, and must tend to thrift and happiness; and as this goes on I believe we shall hear less of gout, Bright's disease, and trouble with the liver and the kidneys in the former, and less of brutality and wife-beating and murder in the latter. I believe that the tendency is towards vegetarian diet, that it will be recognized as fit and proper, and that the time is not far distant when the idea of animal food will be found revolting to civilized man."

Sir Robert Christison. M.D., Asserts positively that 'The flesh and secretions of animals affected with carbuncular diseases analogous to anthrax, as so poisonous that those who eat the product of them are apt to suffer severely — the disease taking the form either of inflammation of the digestive canal, or of an eruption of one or more carbuncles.

Dr. A. Kingsford, of the University of Paris, says: "Animal meat may directly engender many painful and loathsome diseases. Scrofula itself, that fecund source of suffering and death, not improbably owes its origin to flesh-eating habits. It is a curious fact that the word scrofula is derived

from scrofa, a sow. To say that one has scrofula is to say that has swine's evil."

In his fifth report to the Privy Council in England we find Professor Gamgee stating that "one-fifth of the total amount of meat consumed is derived from animals killed in a state of malignant disease"; while Professor A. Wynter Blyth, F.R.C.S., Writes: "Economically speaking flesh food is not necessary; and meat seriously diseased may be so prepared as to look like fairly good meat.

Many an animal with advanced diseases of the lung yet shows to the naked eye no appearance in the flesh which differs from normal." Dr. M.F. Coomes, in the article above quoted, remarks: 'We have many substitutes for meat which are free from the deleterious effects of that food upon the animal economy - namely, in the production of rheumatism, gout and all other kindred diseases, to say nothing of cerebral congestion, which frequently terminates in apoplexy and venal diseases of one kind or another, migraine and many other such forms of headache, resulting from the excessive use of meat, and often produced when meat is not eaten to excess.

Dr. J.H. Kellogg remarks: "It is interesting to note that scientific men all over the world are awakening to the fact that the flesh of animals as food is not a pure nutriment, but is mixed with poisonous substances, excrementitious in character, which are the natural results of animal life. The vegetable stores up energy. It is from the vegetable world — the coal and the wood - that the energy is derived which runs our steam engines, pulls our trains, drives our steamships, and does the work of civilization. It is from the vegetable world that all animals, directly or indirectly, derive the energy which is manifested by animal life through muscular and mental work, The vegetable builds up; the animal tears down. The vegetable stores up energy; the animal expends energy. Various waste and poisonous products result from the manifestation of energy, whether by the locomotive or the animal. The working tissues of the animal are enabled to continue their activity only by the fact that they are continually washed clean by the blood, a never-ceasing stream flowing through and about them, carrying away the poisonous products resulting from their work as rapidly as they are formed. The venous blood owes its character to these poisons, which are removed by the kidneys, lungs, skin, and bowels. The flesh of a dead animal contains a great quantity of These

poisons, the elimination of which ceases at the instant of death, although their formation continues for some time after death. An eminent French surgeon recently remarked that ‘beef-tea is a veritable solution of poisons.~ Intelligent physicians everywhere are coming to recognize these facts, and to make a practical application of them,”

Here again you see we have no lack of evidence; and many of the quotations with regard to the introduction of poisons into the system through flesh-food are not from the vegetarian doctors, but from those who still hold it right to eat sparingly of corpses, but yet have studied to some extent the science of the matter. It should be remembered that dead flesh can never be in a condition of: perfect health, because decay commences at the moment when the creature is killed. All sorts of products are being formed in this process of retrograde change; all of these are useless, and many of them are positively dangerous and poisonous. In the ancient scriptures of the Hindus we find a very remarkable passage, which refers to the fact that even in India some of the lower castes had at that early period commenced to feed on flesh. The statement made is that in ancient times only three diseases existed, one of which was old age; but that now, since people had commenced to eat flesh, seventy-eight new diseases had arisen This shows us that the idea that disease might come from the devouring of corpses has been recognized for thousands of years.

MORE NATURAL TO MAN

Third: Because man is not naturally made to be carnivorous, and therefore this horrible food is not suited to him. Here again let me give you a few quotations to show you what authorities are ranged upon our side of this matter. Baron Cuvier himself writes “The natural food of man, judging from his structure, consists of fruit, roots and vegetables”; and Professor Ray tells us “Certainly man was never made to be a carnivorous animal.” Sir Richard Owen, F.R.C.S., Writes “Anthropoids and all the quadrumana derive their alimentation from fruits, grains, and other succulent vegetable substances, and the strict analogy which exists between the structures of these animals and that of man clearly demonstrates his frugivorous nature.”

Another Fellow of the Royal Society, Professor William Lawrence, writes: The teeth of man have not the slightest resemblance of those of

carnivorous animals, and whether we consider the teeth, the jaws, or the digestive organs, the human structure closely resembles that of the frugivorous animals.”

Once more Dr. Spencer Thompson remarks, “No physiologist would dispute that man ought to live on vegetarian diet”; and Dr. Sylvester Graham writes, “Comparative anatomy proves that man is naturally a frugivorous animal, formed to subsist upon fruits, seeds, and farinaceous vegetables.”

The desirability of the vegetarian diet will of course need no argument for any who believes in the inspiration of the scriptures, for it will be remembered that God in speaking to Adam while in the garden of Eden, said: “Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it will be for meat.” It was only after the fall of man, when death came into the world, that a more degraded idea of feeding came along with it; and if now we hope to rise again to Edenic conditions we must surely commence by abolishing unnecessary slaughter performed in order to supply us with horrible and degrading food.

4.Greater Strength

Fourth: Because men are stronger and better on a vegetarian diet. I know what people say “You will be so weak if you do not eat dead flesh.’ As a matter of fact this is untrue. I do not know whether there may be any people who find themselves weaker on a diet of vegetables; but I do know this, that in many athletic contests recently the vegetarians have proved themselves the strongest and most enduring — as for example in the recent cycling races in Germany, where all those who took high places in the race were vegetarian. There have been many such trials, and they show that, other things being equal, the man who takes pure food succeeds better. We have to face facts, and in this case the facts are all ranged on one side, as against foolish prejudices and loathsome lust on the other. The reason was plainly given recently by Dr. J.D. Craig, who writes, “Vigor of body is often boasted by flesh-eaters, particularly if they live mostly in the open air; but there is this peculiarity about them, that they have not the endurance of vegetarians. The reason for this is that flesh-meat is already on the downward path of retrograde change, and as a consequence its presence in the tissues is of short duration. The

impetus given to it in the body of the animal from which it was taken is reinforced by another impulse in the second one, and for these reasons what energy it does contain is soon given out, and there are urgent demands for more to take its place. The flesh-eater, then, may do large amounts of work in a short time if well-fed. On the other hand, vegetable products are of slow digestion; they contain all of the original store of energy and no poisons; their retrograde change is less rapid than meat, having just commenced, and therefore their force is released more slowly with less loss, and the person nourished by them can work for a long time without food if necessary, and without discomfort. The people in Europe who abstain from flesh are of the better and more intelligent class, and the subject of endurance has been approached and thoroughly investigated by them. In Germany and England a number of notable athletic contests that required endurance have been made between flesh-eaters and vegetarians, with the result that the vegetarians have invariably come off victorious."

We shall find, if we investigate, that this fact has been known for a long time, for even in ancient history we find traces of it. It will be recollected that of all the tribes of Greeks the strongest and the most enduring, by universal admission and reputation, were the Spartans; and the simplicity of their vegetable diet is a matter of common knowledge. Think too of the Greek athletes — those who prepared themselves with such care for participation in the Olympian and Isthmian games. If you will read the classics you will find that these men, who in their own line surpassed all the rest of the world, lived upon figs, nuts, cheese, and maize. Then there were the Roman gladiators — men on whose strength depended their life and fame; and yet we find that their diet consisted exclusively of barley cakes and oil; they knew well that this was the more strengthening food.

All these examples show us that the common and persistent fallacy that one must eat flesh in order to be strong has no foundation in fact; indeed, the exact contrary is true. Charles Darwin remarked in one of his letters "The most extraordinary workers I ever saws, the labourers in the mines of Chile, live exclusively on vegetable food, including many seeds of leguminous plants." Of the same miners Sir Francis Head writes, "It is usual for the copper miners of Central Chile to carry loads of ore of two hundred pounds weight up eighty perpendicular yards twelve times a day; and their diet is entirely vegetarian — a breakfast of figs and small loaves of bread, a dinner of boiled beans, and a supper of roasted wheat.

Mr. F.T. Wood in his Discoveries at Ephesus writes, "The Turkish porters in Smyrna often carry from four hundred to six hundred pounds in weight on their backs, and the captain one day pointed out to me one of his men who had carried an enormous bale of merchandise weighing hundred pounds up an incline into an upper warehouse; so that with this frugal diet their strength was unusually great.

Of these same Turks Sir William Fairburn has said: "The Turk can live and fight where soldiers of any other nationality would starve. His simple habits, his abstinence from intoxicating liquors, and his normal vegetarian diet, enable him to suffer the greatest hardships and to exist on the scantiest and simplest of foods."

I myself can bear witness to the enormous strength displayed by the vegetarian Tamil coolies of the South of India, for I have frequently seen them carry loads which astonished me. I remember in one case standing upon the deck of a steamer, and watching one of these coolies take a huge case upon his back and walk slowly but steadily down a plank to the shore with it and deposit it in a shed. The captain standing by me remarked with surprise, "Why, it took four English labourers to get that case on board in the docks at London!" I have also seen another of these coolies, after having had a grand piano put on his back, carry it unaided for a considerable distance; yet these men are entirely vegetarian, for they live chiefly upon rice and water, with perhaps occasionally a little tamarind for flavouring.

On the same subject Dr. Alexander Haig, whom we have already quoted, writes: "The effect of getting free from uric acid has been to make my bodily powers quite as great as they were fifteen years ago; I scarcely believe that even fifteen years ago I could have undertaken the exercise in which I now indulge with absolute impunity — with freedom from fatigue and distress at the time and from stiffness the next day. Indeed I often say that it is impossible now to tire me, and relatively I believe this is true." This distinguished physician became a vegetarian because from his study of the diseases caused by the presence of uric acid in the system, he discovered that flesh-eating was the chief source of this deadly poison. Another interesting point which he mentions is that his change of diet brought about in him a distinct change of disposition — that whereas before he found himself constantly nervous and irritable, but now

became much steadier and calmer and less angry; he fully realizes that this is due to the change in his food.

If we require any further evidence, we have it close to our hand in the animal kingdom. We shall observe that there the carnivora are not the strongest, but that all the work of the world is done by the herbivora — by horses, mules, oxen, elephants, and camels. We do not find that men can utilize the lion or the tiger, or that the strength of these savage flesh-eaters is at all equal to that of those who assimilate directly from the vegetable kingdom.

5. Less Animal Passion

Fifth: Because the eating of dead bodies leads to indulgence in drink and increases animal passions in man. Mr. H.B Fowler, who has studied and lectured on dipsomania for forty years, declares that the use of flesh foods, by the excitation which it exercises on the nervous system, prepares the way for habits of intemperance in everything; and the more flesh is consumed, the more serious is the danger of confirmed alcoholism. Many experienced physicians have made similar experiments and wisely act on them in their treatment of dipsomaniacs. The lower part of man's nature is undoubtedly intensified by the habit of feeding upon corpses. Even after eating a full meal of such horrible material a man still feels dissatisfied, for he is still conscious of a vague uncomfortable sense of want, and consequently he suffers greatly from nervous strain. This craving is the hunger of the bodily tissues, which cannot be renewed by the poor stuff offered to them as food. To satisfy this vague craving, or rather to appease these restless nerves so that it will no longer be felt, recourse is often had to stimulants. Sometimes alcoholic beverages are taken, sometimes an attempt is made to allay these feelings with black coffee, and at other times strong tobacco is used in the endeavour to soothe the irritated, exhausted nerves. Here we have the beginning of intemperance, for in the majority of cases intemperance began in the attempt to allay with alcoholic stimulants the vague uncomfortable sense of want which follows the eating of impoverished food — food that does not feed. There is no doubt that drunkenness and all the poverty, wretchedness, disease and crime associated with it may frequently be traced to errors of feeling. We might follow out this line of thought indefinitely. We might speak of the irritability, occasionally culminating in insanity, which is now acknowledged by all authorities to be a frequent

result of erroneous feeding. We might mention a hundred familiar symptoms of indigestion, and explain that indigestion is always the result of incorrect feeding. Surely, however, enough has been said to indicate the importance and far-reaching influence of a pure diet upon the welfare of the individual and of the race.

Mr. Bramwell Booth, the chief of the Salvation Army, has issued a pronunciamiento upon this subject of vegetarianism, in which he speaks strongly and decidedly in its favour, giving a list of not less than nineteen good reasons why men should abstain from the eating of flesh. He insists that a vegetarian diet is necessary to purity, to chastity and to the perfect control of the appetites and passions which are so often the source of great temptation. He remarks that the growth of meat-eating among the people is one of the causes of the increase of drunkenness, and that it also favours indolence, sleepiness, want of energy, indigestion, constipation and other like miseries and degradations. He also states that eczema, piles, worms, dysentery, and severe headaches are frequently brought on by flesh diet, and that he believes the great increase in consumption and cancer during the last hundred years to have been caused by the corresponding increase in the use of animal food.

6. Economy

Sixth: Because the vegetable diet is in every way cheaper as well as better than flesh. In the encyclical just mentioned Mr. Booth gives as one of his reasons for advocating it that "a vegetarian diet of wheat, oats, maize, and other grains, lentils, peas, beans, nuts and similar food is more than ten times as economical as flesh diet. Meat contains half its weight in water, which has to be paid for as though it were meat. A vegetable diet, even if we allow cheese, butter and milk, will cost only about a quarter as much as a mixed diet of flesh and vegetables. Tens of thousands of our poor people, who have now the greatest difficulty to make ends meet after buying flesh-food, would by the substitution of fruit and vegetables and other economical foods, be able to get along in comfort."

There is also an economic side of this question which must not be ignored. Note how many more men could be supported by a certain number of acres of land which were devoted to the growing of wheat, than by the same amount of land which was laid out in pasture. Think, too, for how many more men healthy work upon the land would be found

in the former case than in the latter; and I think you will begin to see that there is a great deal to be said from this point of view also.

The Sin of Slaughter

Hitherto we have been speaking of what we have called the physical and selfish considerations which should make a man give up the eating of this dead flesh and turn him, even though only for his own sake, to the purer diet. Let us now think for a few moments of the moral and unselfish considerations connected with his duty towards others. The first of these — and this does seem to me a most terrible thing — is the awful sin of unnecessarily murdering these animals. Those who live in Chicago know well how this ghastly ceaseless slaughter goes on in their midst, how they feed the greater part of the world by wholesale butchery, and how the money made in this abominable business is stained with blood, every coin of it. I have shown clearly upon irreproachable testimony that all this is unnecessary. The destruction of life is always a crime. There may be certain cases in which it is the lesser of two evils; but here it is needless and without a shadow of justification, for it happens only because of the selfish unscrupulous greed of those who coin money out of the agonies of the animal kingdom in order to pander to the perverted tastes of those who are sufficiently depraved to desire such loathsome aliment.

Remember that it is not only those who do the obscene work, but those who by feeding upon this dead flesh encourage them and make their crime remunerative, who are guilty before God of this awful thing. Every person who partakes of this unclean food has his share in the indescribable guilt and suffering by which it has been obtained. It is universally recognized in law that *qui facit per alium facit per se* — whatsoever a man does through another, he does himself. A man will often say “But it would make no difference, for although you may consume only a pound or two each day, that would in time amount to the weight of an animal. Secondly, it is not a question of amount, but of complicity in a crime; and if you partake of the results of the crime, you are helping to make it remunerative, and so you share in the guilt. No honest man can fail to see that this is so. But when men’s lower lusts are concerned they are usually dishonest in their view, and decline to face the plain facts. There surely can be no difference of opinion as to the proposition that all this horrible unnecessary slaughter is indeed a terrible crime.

Another point to be remembered is that there is dreadful cruelty connected with the transport of these miserable animals, both by land and sea, and there is often dreadful cruelty in the slaughtering itself. Those who seek to justify these loathsome crimes will tell you that an endeavour is made to murder the animals as rapidly and painlessly as possible; but you have only to read the reports to see that in many cases these intentions are not carried out, and appalling suffering ensues.

The Degradation of the Slaughterman

Yet another point to be considered is the wickedness of causing degradation and sin in other men. If you yourselves had to use the knife of the pole axe, and slaughter the animal before you could feed on its flesh, you would realize the sickening nature of the task and would soon refuse to perform it. Would the delicate ladies who devour sanguinary beefsteaks like to see their sons working as slaughtermen? If not, then they have no right to put this task upon some other woman's son. We have no right to impose upon a fellow-citizen work which we ourselves should decline to do. It may be said that we force no one to undertake this abominable means of livelihood; but that is a mere tergiversation, for in eating this horrible food we are making a demand that some one shall brutalize himself, that some one shall degrade himself below the level of humanity. You know that a class of men has been created by the demand for this food — a class of men which has an exceedingly bad reputation. Naturally those who are brutalized by such unclean work as this prove themselves brutal in other relations as well. They are savage in their disposition and bloodthirsty in their quarrels; and I have heard it stated that in many a murder case evidence has been found that the criminal employed the peculiar twist of the knife which is characteristic of the slaughterman. You must surely recognize that here is an unspeakably horrible work, and that if you take any part in this terrible business — even that of helping to support it — you are putting another man in the position of doing (not the least for your need, but merely for the gratification of your lusts and passions) work that you would under no circumstances consent to do for yourself.

Then we should surely remember that we are all of us hoping for the time of universal peace and kindness — a golden age when war shall be no more, a time when man shall be so far removed from strife and anger that the whole conditions of the world will be different from those which now

prevail. Do you not think that the animal kingdom also will have its share in that good time coming — that this horrible nightmare of wholesale slaughter will be removed from it? The really civilized nations of the world know far better than this; it is only that we of the West are as yet a young race, and still have many of the crudities of youth; otherwise we could not bear these things amongst us even for a day. Beyond all question the future is with the vegetarian. It seems certain that in the future — and I hope it may be in the near future — we shall be looking back upon this time with disgust and with horror. In spite of all its wonderful discoveries, in spite of its marvellous machinery, in spite of enormous fortunes which have been made in it, I am certain that our descendants will look back upon this age as one of only partial civilization, and in fact but little removed from savagery. One of the arguments by which they will prove this will assuredly be that we allowed among us this wholesale unnecessary slaughter of innocent animals — that we actually fattened on it and made money out of it, and that we even created a class of beings who did this dirty work for us, and that we were not ashamed to profit by the result of their degradation.

All of these are considerations referring only to the physical plane. Now let me tell you something of the occult side of this. Up to the present I have made to you many statements — strong and definite, I hope — but every one of them statements which you can prove for yourself. You can read the testimony of well-known doctors and scientific men; you may test for yourselves the economic side of the question; you may go and see, if you will, how all these different types of men contrive to live so well upon vegetarian diet. All that I have said hitherto is thus within your reach. But now I am abandoning the field of ordinary physical reasoning, and taking you up to the level where you have, naturally, to take the word of those who have explored these higher realms. Let us then turn now to the hidden side of all this — the occult.

Occult Reasons

Under this heading also we shall have two sets of reasons — those which refer to ourselves and our own development, and those which refer to the great scheme of evolution and our duty towards it; so that once more we may classify them as selfish and unselfish, although at a much higher level than before. I have, I hope, clearly shown in the earlier part of this lecture that there is simply no room for argument in regard to this

question of vegetarianism; the whole of the evidence and of the considerations are entirely on one side, and there is absolutely nothing to be said in opposition to them. This is even more strikingly the case when we come to consider the occult part of our argument. There are some students hovering round the fringes of occultism who are not yet prepared to follow its dictates to the uttermost, and therefore do not accept its teaching when it interferes with their personal habits and desires. Some such have tried to maintain that the question of food can make little difference from the occult standpoint; but the unanimous verdict of all the great schools of occultism, both ancient and modern, has been definite on this point, and they have asserted that for all true progress purity is necessary, even on the physical plane and in matters of diet as well as in far higher matters.

In previous lectures I have already explained the existence of the different planes of nature and of the vast unseen world all about us; and I have also had occasion to refer often to the fact that man has within himself matter belonging to all these higher planes, so that he is furnished with a vehicle corresponding to each of them, through which he can receive impressions and by means of which he can act. Can these higher bodies of man be in any way affected by the food which enters into the physical body with which they are so closely connected? Assuredly they can, and for this reason. The physical matter in man is in close touch with the astral and mental matter — so much so that each is to a great extent a counterpart of the other. There are many types and degrees of density among astral matter, for example, so that it is possible for one man to have an astral body built of coarse and gross particles, while another may have one which is much more delicate and refined. As the astral body is the vehicle of the emotions, passions and sensations, it follows that the man whose astral body is of the grosser type will be chiefly amenable to the grosser varieties of passion and emotion; whereas the man who has a finer astral body will find that its particles most readily vibrate in response to higher and more refined emotions and aspirations. The man therefore who builds gross and undesirable matter into his physical body is thereby drawing into his astral body matter of a coarse and unpleasant type as its counterpart.

We all know that on the physical plane the effect of overindulgence in dead flesh is to produce a coarse gross appearance in the man. That does not mean that it is only the physical body which is in an unlovely

condition; it means also that those parts of the man which are invisible to our ordinary sight, the astral and the mental bodies are not in good condition either. Thus a man who is building himself a gross and impure physical body is building for himself at the same time coarse and unclean astral and mental bodies as well. That is visible at once to the eye of the developed clairvoyant. The man who learns to see these higher vehicles sees at once the effects on the higher bodies produced by impurity in the lower; he sees at once the difference between the man who feeds his physical vehicle with pure food and the man who puts into it this loathsome decaying flesh. Let us see how this difference will affect the man's evolution.

Impure Vehicles

It is clear that a man's duty with regard to himself is to develop all his different vehicles as far as possible, in order to make them finished instruments for the use of the soul. There is still a higher stage in which that soul itself is being trained to be a fit instrument in the hands of the Logos, a perfect channel for the divine grace; but the first step towards this high aim is that the soul itself shall learn thoroughly to control the lower vehicles, so that there shall be in them no thought or feeling except those which the soul allows. All these vehicles therefore should be in the highest possible condition of efficiency; all should be pure and clean and free from taint; and it is obvious that this can never be so long as the man absorbs into the physical vehicle such undesirable constituents. Even the physical body and its sense-perceptions can never be at their best unless the food is pure. Any one who adopts vegetarian diet will speedily begin to notice that his sense of taste and of smell is far keener than it was when he fed upon flesh, and that he is now able to discern a delicate difference of flavour in foods which before he had thought of as tasteless, such as rice and wheat.

The same thing is true to a still greater extent with regard to the higher bodies. Their senses also cannot be clear if impure or coarse matter is drawn into them; anything of this nature clogs and dulls them, so that it becomes more difficult for the soul to use them. This is a fact which has always been recognized by the student of occultism; you will find that all those who in ancient days entered upon the Mysteries were men of the utmost purity, and of course invariably vegetarian. Carnivorous diet is

fatal to anything like real development, and those who adopt it are throwing away serious and unnecessary difficulties in their own way.

I am well aware that there are other and still higher considerations, which are of greater weight than anything upon the physical plane, and that the purity of the heart and of the soul is more important to a man than that of the body. Yet there is surely no reason why we should not have both; indeed, the one suggests the other, and the higher should include the lower. There are quite enough difficulties in the way of self-control and self-development; it is surely worse than foolish to go out of our way to add another and a very considerable one to the list. Although it is true that a pure heart will do more for us than a pure body, yet the latter can certainly do a great deal; and we are none of us so far advanced along the road towards spirituality that we can afford to neglect the great advantage which it gives us. Anything that makes our path harder than it need be is emphatically something to be avoided. In all cases this flesh food undoubtedly makes the physical body a worse instrument, and puts difficulties in the way of the soul by intensifying all the undesirable elements and passions belonging to these lower planes.

Nor is this serious effect during physical life the only one of which we have to think. If, through introducing loathsome impurities into the physical body, the man builds himself a coarse and unclean astral body, we have to remember that it is in this degraded vehicle that he will have to spend the first part of his life after death. Because of the coarse matter which he has built into it, all sorts of undesirable entities will be drawn into association with him and will make his vehicles their home, and find a ready response within him to their lower passions. It is not only that his animal passions are more easily stirred here on earth, but also that he will suffer acutely from the working out of these desires after death. Here again, looked at even from the selfish point of view, we see that occult considerations confirm the straightforward common-sense of the arguments on the physical plane. The higher sight, when brought to bear upon this problem, shows us still more vividly how undesirable is the devouring of flesh, since it intensified within us that from which we most need to be free, and therefore from the point of view of progress that habit is a thing to be cast out at once and forever.

Man's Duty Towards Nature

Then there is the far more important unselfish side of the question — that of man's duty towards nature. Every religion has taught that man should put himself always on the side of the will of God in the world, on the side of good as against evil, of evolution as against retrogression. The man who ranges himself on the side of evolution realizes the wickedness of destroying life; for he knows that, just as he is here in this physical body in order that he may learn the lessons of this plane, so is the animal occupying his body for the same reason, that out of it he may gain experience at his lower stage. He knows that the life behind the animal is the Divine Life, that all life in the world is Divine; the animals therefore are truly our brothers, even though they may be younger brothers, and we can have no sort of right to take their lives for the gratification of our perverted tastes — no right to cause them untold agony and suffering merely to satisfy our degraded and detestable lusts.

We have brought things to such a pass with our miscalled "sport" and our wholesale slaughterings, that all wild creatures fly from the sight of us. Does that seem like the universal brotherhood of God's creatures? Is that your idea of the golden age of world-wise kindness that is to come — a condition when every living thing flees from the face of man because of his murderous instincts? There is an influence flowing back upon us from all this — an effect which you can hardly realize unless you are able to see how it looks when regarded with the sight of the higher plane. Every one of these creatures which you so ruthlessly murder in this way has its own thoughts and feelings with regard to all this ; it has horror, pain, and indignation, and an intense but unexpressed feeling of the hideous injustice of it all. The whole atmosphere about us is full of it. Twice lately I have heard from psychic people that they felt the awful aura or surroundings of Chicago even many miles away from it. Mrs. Besant herself told me the same thing years ago in England — that long before she came in sight of Chicago she felt the horror of it and the deadly pall of depression descending upon her, and asked: "Where are we, and what is the reason that there should be this terrible feeling in the air? To sense the effect as clearly as this is beyond the reach of the person who is not developed; but, though all the inhabitants may not be directly conscious of it and recognize it as Mrs. Besant did, they may be sure that they are suffering from it unconsciously, and that, that terrible vibration of horror and fear and injustice is acting upon every one of them, even though they do not know it. Ghastly Unseen Results

The feelings of nervousness and profound depression which are so common there are largely due to that awful influence which spreads over the city like a plague-cloud. I do not know how many thousands of creatures are killed every day, but the number is very large. Remember that every one of these creatures is a definite entity — not a permanent reincarnating individuality like yours or mine, but still an entity which has its life upon the astral plane, and persists there for a considerable time. Remember that every one of these remains to pour out his feeling of indignation and horror at all the injustice and torment which has been inflicted upon him. Realize for yourself the terrible atmosphere which exists about those slaughterhouses; remember that a clairvoyant can see the vast hosts of animal souls, that he knows how strong are their feelings of horror and resentment, and how these recoil at all points upon the human race. They react most of all upon those who are least able to resist them — upon the children, who are more delicate and sensitive than the hardened adult. That city is a terrible place in which to bring up children — a place where the whole atmosphere both physical and psychic is charged with fumes of blood and with all that means.

I read an article only the other day in which it was explained that the nauseating stench which rises from those Chicago slaughterhouses, and settles like a fatal miasma over the city, is by no means the most deadly influence that comes up from that Christian hell for animals, though it is the breath of certain death to many a mother's darling. The slaughterhouses make not only a pest-hole for the bodies of children, but for their souls as well. Not only are the children employed in the most revolting and cruel work, but the whole trend of their thoughts is directed towards killing. Occasionally one is found too sensitive to endure the sights and sounds of that ceaseless awful battle between man's cruel lust and the inalienable right of every creature to its own life. I read how one boy, for whom a minister had secured a place in this slaughterhouse, returned home day after day pale and sick and unable to eat or sleep, and finally came to that minister of the gospel of the compassionate Christ and told him that he was willing to starve if necessary, but that he could not wade in blood another day. The horrors of the slaughter so affected him that he could no longer sleep. Yet this is what many a boy is doing and seeing from day to day until he becomes hardened to the taking of life; and then some day, instead of cutting the throat of a lamb or a pig he kills a man, and straightway we turn our lust for slaughter upon him in turn, and think that we have done justice.

I read that a young woman who does much philanthropic work in the neighbourhood of these pest-houses declares that what most impresses her about the children is that they seem to have no games except games of killing, that they have no conception of any relation to animals except the relation of the slaughterer to the victim. This is the education which so-called Christians are giving to their children of the slaughterhouse — a daily education in murder; and then they express surprise at the number and brutality of the murders in that district. Yet your Christian public goes on serenely saying its prayers and singing its psalms and listening to its sermons, as if no such outrages were being perpetuated against God's children in that sinkhole of pestilence and crime. Surely the habit of eating flesh has produced a moral apathy among us. Are you doing well, do you think, in rearing your future citizens among surroundings of such utter brutality as this? Even on the physical plane this is a terribly serious matter, and from the occult point of view it is unfortunately far more serious still; for the occultist sees the psychic result of all this, sees how these forces are acting upon the people and how they intensify brutality and unscrupulousness. He sees what a centre of vice and crime you have created, and how from it the infection is gradually spreading until it affects the whole country, and even the whole of what is called civilized humanity.

The world is being affected by it in many ways which most people do not in the least realize. There are constant feelings of causeless terror in the air. Many of your children are unnecessarily and inexplicably afraid; they feel terror of they do not know what — terror of the dark, or when they are alone for a few moments. Strong forces are playing about us for which you cannot account, and you do not realize that this all comes from the fact that the whole atmosphere is charged with the hostility of these murdered creatures. The stages of evolution are closely interrelated, and you cannot do wholesale murder in this way upon your younger brothers without feeling the effect terribly among your own innocent children. Surely a better time shall come, when we shall be free from this horrible blot upon our civilization, this awful reproach upon our compassion and our sympathy; and when that comes we shall find presently that there will be a vast improvement in these matters, and by degrees we shall all rise to a higher level and be freed from all these instinctive terrors and hatreds.

The Better Time to Come

We might all be freed from it very soon, if men and women would only think; for the average man is not after all a brute, but means to be kind if he only knew how. He does not think; but goes on from day to day, and does not realize that he is taking part all the time in an awful crime. But facts are facts, and there is no escape from them; every one who is partaking of this abomination, is helping to make this appalling thing a possibility, is undoubtedly sharing the responsibility for it. You know that this is so, and you can see what a terrible thing it is; but you will say "What can we do to improve matters — we who are only tiny units in this mighty seething mass of humanity?" It is only by units rising above the rest and becoming more civilized that we shall finally arrive at a higher civilization of the race as a whole. There is a Golden Age to come, not only for man but for the lower kingdoms, a time when humanity will realize its duty to its younger brothers — not to destroy them, but to help them and to train them, so that we may receive from them, not terror and hatred but love and devotion and friendship and reasonable co-operation. A time will come when all the forces of Nature shall be intelligently working together towards the final end, not with constant suspicion and hostility, but with universal recognition of that Brotherhood which is ours because we are all children of the same Almighty Father.

Let us at least make the experiment; let us free ourselves from complicity in these awful crimes, let us set ourselves to try each in our own small circle to bring nearer that bright time of peace and love which is the dream and the earnest desire of every true-hearted and thinking man. At least we ought surely to be willing to do so small a thing as this to help the world onward towards that glorious future; we ought to make ourselves pure, our thoughts and our actions as well as our food, so that by example as well as by precept we may be doing all that in us lies to spread the gospel of love and of compassion, to put an end to the reign of brutality and terror, and to bring nearer the dawn of the great kingdom of righteousness and love when the will of our Father shall be done upon earth as it is in heaven.



CHAPTER 11. HOW TO BUILD CHARACTER

The very idea implied in the building of character is a new one to many people. They usually think and speak of a man as born with a certain character and practically incapable of changing it. They sometimes think of a man's character having been altered by great sorrow or suffering, as in truth it often is; but comparatively few people seem to realize that it is a thing that they can take in hand and mould for themselves — a thing at which they can steadily work with the certainty of obtaining good results. Yet it is true that a man may change himself intelligently and voluntarily, and may make of himself practically what he will within very wide limits. But naturally this is hard work. The man's character, as it stands now, is the result of his own previous actions and thoughts. You who are familiar with the idea of reincarnation, with the thought that this life is only one day in the far larger life, will recognize that this day must depend upon all other days, and that the man is now what he has made himself by antecedent development. But he has lived through many lives, and that means that he has been many thousands of years in training himself to be what he is, even though such training has been unconscious on his part and without any definite aim. He has therefore established within himself many decided habits. We all know how difficult it is to conquer habit — how almost impossible it is to get rid of even some small physical trick of manner when once it has become a part of ourselves. Reasoning from small things to larger ones, we may readily realize that when a man has certain habits which have been steadily strengthening themselves for thousands of years, it is a serious task for him to try to check their momentum and to reverse the currents. These lines of thought and feeling are welded into the man, and they show as qualities which seem to be deeply ingrained in him. Now that he has yielded to them through all that length of time it seems from the worldly point of view impossible for him to resist them, yet it is by no means impossible from the point of view of the occultist.

If, for example, the man has what we call an irritable character, that is because he has yielded himself to feelings of that nature in previous lives — because he has not developed within himself the virtue of self-control. If a man has a narrow, mean, and grasping character, it is because he has not yet learnt the opposite virtues of generosity and unselfishness. So it is all the way through; the man of open mind and genial heart has built into himself these virtues during the ages that have passed over his head. We

are exactly what we have made ourselves. Yet we have become what we are without any special effort of thought or of intention. In those lives that are past we have grown without setting any definite object before us, and we have allowed ourselves to be to a great extent the creatures of our surroundings and circumstances.

In some cases we may have intentionally formed ourselves upon the model of someone whom we admired, and that person may have influenced our lives largely for a time. But obviously this hero of ours, whom we have copied, may have had bad qualities as well as good ones; and at these earlier stages it is little likely that we had the discrimination to choose only the good and to refuse the evil. So we may probably have reproduced in ourselves his undesirable qualities as well as those which were worthy of imitation. You may see that this is so if you watch the actions of children in the present day, for from them we may learn much as to the probable actions of the child-nature of our undeveloped souls in the past. You may see how sometimes a boy conceives a violent hero-worship for some older person, and tries to model himself upon him. Suppose, for example, that the object of his adoration is some old sailor who can tell him wonderful stories of adventure on stormy seas and in far-distant lands. What the boy admires is the courage and endurance of the man, and he respects him for the experience and the knowledge which he has acquired in his wanderings. He cannot immediately reproduce the courage, the endurance, or the experience; but he can, and he does forthwith, copy the outward traits of his sailor-friend, and so he will faithfully imitate the curious nautical expressions, the tobacco-chewing and the rolling gait. Much in the same way we also may have been hero-worshippers in days and lives gone by, and we may have set up many an unpleasant habit in mimicry of some savage chieftain whose boastful bravery extorted our admiration.

It is probable, however, that this idea (of definitely taking our selves in hand for the sake of improvement) has occurred to few of us before this life. There is no question that to uproot old bad habits and to replace them by good ones means a great deal of trouble and a great deal of arduous self-control. It is a serious task, and the ordinary man has no knowledge of any motive sufficiently powerful to induce him to attempt it. In the absence of this adequate motive, he does not see why he should put himself to so much and such serious trouble. He probably thinks of himself as a good fellow on the whole, though possibly with one or two

amiable weaknesses; but he reflects that every one has his weaknesses, and that those of many other people are much worse than any which he observes in himself. So he lets himself drift along without making any effort.

Before such a man can be expected to reverse his old habits, and set to work painfully to form new ones, he must first realize the necessity of a change of standpoint, and must obtain a wider view of life as a whole. The ordinary man of the world is frankly, cynically selfish. I do not mean that he is intentionally cruel, or that he is devoid of good feelings; on the contrary, he may often have good and generous impulses. But his life on the whole is certainly a self-centred life; his own personality is the pivot round which the majority of his thought revolves; he judges everything instantly and instinctively by the way in which it happens to affect him personally. Either he is absorbed in the pursuit of wealth, and blind to the higher side of things and to the spiritual life, or else his chief object in existence appears to be the physical enjoyment of the moment.

The Average Irresponsible Vacuity

To see that this is so, we have only to look round us at the men whom we meet every day, or to listen to the conversations which are going on in the streets or the railway carriages. In nine cases out of ten we shall notice that the people are talking either about money, or amusements, or gossip. Their one idea in life seems to be what they call “having a good time,” or, as they frequently put it in still coarser and more objectionable language, “having lots of fun” — as though this were the end and the object of the existence of a reasonable being, a living spark made in the Divine Image! I have been much struck with this — that the only idea which many people seem to connect with life is that of the sensuous pleasure of the moment — just amusement and nothing else. That seems to be all that they are able to comprehend, and it appears to be a sufficient reason for not having visited a certain place to say that there is no “fun” to be had there. I have often heard a similar remark made in France; there also *s’amuser bien* seems to be the great duty which is recognized by the majority, and it has passed into a figure of ordinary speech, so that a man will often write to another, “I hope you are amusing yourself well” — as though the pleasure of the moment were the only important business.

To listen to the conversation of these men and women of the present age one would suppose them to be mere insects of a day, with no sense of duty, of responsibility, or of seriousness; they have not in the least realized themselves as immortal souls who are here for a purpose, and have a definite evolution before them; and so their life is one of shallow ignorance and giggling vacuity. The only life they seem to know is the life of the moment, and in this way they lower themselves to the level of the least intelligent of the animals about them. Man has been defined as a thinking animal, but it seems evident that as yet that definition applies only to part of the race. I think we must admit that to one or other of these two classes — the money-hunters, or the pleasure-hunters — belong the majority of the people in our occidental races, and that those whose principal thoughts in life are duty and the pursuit of spiritual development are only a small minority.

There are many of them who have a recognition of duty in connection with their business, and they consider that everything else must yield to that — even their personal pleasure. You will hear a man say “I should like to do this, but I have my business which requires attention; I cannot afford to lose time from my business.” So that even the idea of personal pleasure becomes subsidiary to that of business. This is at least somewhat of an improvement, though it is often sadly overdone, and you will find many people to whom this idea of business has in its turn become a kind of god which they worship. They are in a condition of abject slavery to it, and they never can let themselves escape from its influence even for a moment. They bring it home with them, they are wholly involved with it, and they even dream of it at night; so that they sacrifice everything to this Moloch of business, and they cannot be said to have time for any true life at all. It will be seen that though there is here a dawning conception of duty it is still only upon the physical plane, and their thought is still limited to the affairs of the day. Only in the case of a small number will it be found that this idea is dominated by a light from higher planes; rarely indeed has the man a glimpse of a wider horizon. This concentration of attention upon the physical life of the passing day seems to be a characteristic of our present race, of the great so-called civilization which at present exists both in Europe and in America. Obviously the man who wishes to do anything definite in the way of character-building must first of all change this standpoint, for otherwise he has no adequate motive for undertaking so severe a task.

Conversion

In religious circles this change of standpoint is called conversion; and if it were freed from the somewhat unpleasant canting associations with which it is ordinarily surrounded, this would be a good word to express exactly what happens to man. We know that in Latin *verto* means “to turn” and *con* signifies “together with,” so conversion is the point at which the man turns from following selfish ends and fighting against the great stream of Divine evolution, and henceforth begins to understand his position and to move along with that stream. In the Hindu religion they call this same change by the name of *viveka*, or “discrimination,” because when that comes to a man it means that he has learnt to see the relative value of objects and to distinguish to some extent between the real and the unreal, so that he is able to perceive that the higher things only are those which are worthy of his attention. In the Buddhist religion another name is given to this change — *manodvaravarjana*, or “The opening of the doors of the mind.” The man’s mind has in reality opened its doors; discrimination has awakened within it and its owner has brought it to bear upon the problems of life. The man who is wrapped up in pleasure has not yet opened his mind at all; he is not thinking about life in any serious way, but is immersed in the lower currents. The business man has developed the desire for acquisition, and is bending all his energies into action for that purpose; but his mind also has not yet opened to understand the realities of a higher life.

This opening of the doors, this discrimination, this conversion, means the realization that the things which are seen upon the physical plane are temporal and of little importance as compared with these other things which are unseen and eternal. It is precisely that which is spoken of in the bible, when we are told: “Set your affection on things above and not on things of the earth... for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” This does not mean that a man must give up his ordinary daily life, or must abandon his business or his duties in order to become what is commonly called a pious or a devout man; but it does mean that he should learn intelligently to appreciate other things besides those which are immediately obvious upon the physical plane.

We all of us at different stages have to learn to do this; we have to learn to widen our horizon. As little children, for example, we appreciate only

those things which are near to us, and we are unable to look far ahead of time, or to plan much for the future. But as we grow older we learn by experience that it is sometimes necessary for us to give up the pleasures of the moment in order that we may gain something in the future which shall be better and greater. In the first place this is usually to gain something still for ourselves; for it is only by degrees that the true unselfishness dawns. In many cases the little child would spend the whole of his time in play if he were allowed to do so, and it is a matter of regret to him that restrictions are imposed upon him and that he is compelled to learn. Yet we universally recognize that the child should learn, because we know what the child as yet does not — that that learning will fit him to take his place in life, and to have a fuller and more useful career than would be possible for him if instead of learning he devoted himself entirely to the joys of the moment.

Yet we who thus enforce this learning upon the child are ourselves doing the same thing for which we blame the little one, when we regard the matter from a somewhat higher standpoint. We also are working for the moment — for the moment of this one life, and we fail to realize that there is something infinitely grander and higher and happier within reach if we only understood it. We are working for this one day only, and not for the future which will be eternal. The moment a man becomes convinced of this higher life and of the eternal future — as soon as he realizes that he has his part to play in that, naturally his common-sense asserts itself, and he says to himself: “If that be so, obviously these material things are of comparatively little account, and instead of wasting the whole of my time I must be learning to prepare myself for this greater life in the future.” There at once is the adequate motive whose lack we previously deplored; there is the incentive to learn to build the character, in order to fit oneself for that other and higher life.

Puritanism

I think that Puritanism, which has played such a prominent part in the history both of England and of America, arose chiefly as a reaction against that view of life of which I was speaking just now — the mere living for the careless selfish enjoyment of the moment. I believe that Puritanism was in itself largely a protest against that, and in so far as it emphasized the reality of the higher life, and the necessity of paying attention to it, it had good in it. True, it also did much harm — more harm than good on

the whole, because it did this terrible thing, that it made people identify religion with sourness and sadness. It made people think that to be good one must be miserable; it degraded and all but destroyed the idea of the loving Father. It blasphemed God by telling horrible and wicked falsehoods with regard to Him; it misrepresented Him as a stern and cruel judge, a monster, instead of a Father full of love and compassion; and in doing this it warped and distorted Anglo-Saxon Christianity, and set a stamp upon it from which it has not even yet recovered.

Perhaps the reason of this may be that it made a common mistake — that it confused cause and effect. It is true that a man who has learned to appreciate the higher joys of the spiritual life cares little for those of the ordinary physical existence. That is not because he has lost his capacity for joy, but because he has now realized something so much fuller and wider, that by comparison with it the lower delight has ceased to seem joy at all. When the boy comes to be a man he has outgrown his childish toys, yet he is capable of other and much greater pleasures than those could ever have given him. Just so the man who rises in evolution, so that instead of mere selfish delights he comes to appreciate the far greater joy of unselfish work, will find that his ordinary pleasures are no longer satisfying to him and seem to him no longer worthy the trouble of pursuit. This is because he has reached a higher standpoint and gained a wider horizon; but the result upon the physical plane gives the impression that he has ceased to be interested in the lower physical pleasures.

We must not, however, confuse the cause with the effect as the unfortunate Puritans did, and suppose that by turning our backs upon the joys of the physical plane we therefore instantly become the more highly evolved men with the wider outlook. It is true that because the young man has developed he no longer cares for infantile pleasures; it would not be true that the infant by refusing the delights appropriate to his age would thereby become an adult. It is well, then, that we should realize clearly that it is emphatically a false and foolish doctrine that to be good men must be miserable. Exactly the reverse is true, for God means man to be happy, and it is certainly his duty to be so; for a man who is unhappy radiates depression all round him, and thus makes life harder for his fellow-men.

The Awakening

How then does a man come to make this great effort of trying to build his character, trying to make something of himself? The safest and the most satisfactory path is that which we have just indicated. The man comes to wider knowledge, he comes to understand that there is a grander and higher life; he sees that there is a great scheme, and that man is part of that scheme. Seeing that, and appreciating to some extent the splendour and the glory of the plan, he wishes to become an intelligent part of it — he wishes to take his place in it, no longer merely as a straw swept along by a storm, but rather as one who understands and desires to take his share in the mighty divine work that is being done.

There are others whose awakening comes along a different line — the line of devotion, rather than of knowledge. They are strongly attracted either by a high ideal, or by some lofty personality; their love and admiration are excited, and for the sake of that ideal, for the sake of that personality, they make strenuous endeavours to develop themselves. When this devotion is inspired by the glimpse of a splendid ideal it is indeed a glorious thing, and its action is practically indistinguishable from that of spiritual knowledge. When the devotion is to a person it is often hardly less beautiful, though then there is a certain element of danger arising from the fact that the object of this intense affection is human and must therefore possess imperfections. Sometimes it happens that the devotee comes suddenly upon one of these imperfections, and receives therefrom a rude shock which may tend to diminish or divert the devotion. The high ideal can never fail the man who trusts it; the person may always do so to some extent or in some respect, and consequently there is less security in the devotion to a teacher.

We in the Theosophical Society have had some experience in this direction, for among our students there are many who approach the truth by this road of devotion. When the devotion is to Theosophy, all goes well; their enthusiasm grows ever more and more brilliant as they learn more of the truth; and no matter how far they penetrate, or which of its many sides they investigate, they can never be disappointed. But when the devotion has been not to Theosophy or to the great Masters who gave it to the world, but to some one of their instruments on the physical plane, we have found that its basis is less secure. Many entered the Society and took up its studies on the strength of a personal devotion to its great founder, Madame Blavatsky. Those who knew her most intimately, those who came nearest to understanding that wonderful

many-sided individuality, never lost faith in her, nor their deep heartfelt affection and devotion for her; but others who knew less of her were perturbed when they read or heard of wild accusations brought against her, or when they saw the unfavourable report of a learned society concerning her. Then it often happened that because their faith had been based upon the personality (and upon one which they did not understand) they found themselves altogether overthrown, and abandoned the study of Theosophy for this incarnation. Such action is obviously utterly irrational, for even if all the absurd stories circulated about Madame Blavatsky had been true, the mighty doctrines of Theosophy still remain the same, and its system is still unassailable; but the emotional person does not reason, and so when the prejudices of these good people were shocked or their feelings were hurt, they abandoned the society in a rage, not realising that they were themselves the only sufferers through their folly.

Devotion is a splendid force; yet without an intelligent comprehension of that to which the devotion is felt, it has often led people terribly wrong. But if the man clearly grasps the mighty Divine scheme of evolution, and feels his devotion called forth by that, then all is well with him, for that cannot fail him, and the more he knows of it, the deeper his devotion will become and the more thoroughly will he identify himself with it. There is no fear of close investigation there, for fuller knowledge means deeper adoration, greater wonder, profounder love. For these reasons it is best for the man to feel his devotion for the ideals rather than for personalities, however lofty these may be. Best of all is it that he should base himself upon reason and fact, and argue from what is well-known scientifically to the things not yet known in the outer world. His inferences may sometimes be wrong, but he realizes that possibility, and is always ready to change them if good reason can be shown to him. Any such alterations in detail cannot affect the basis upon which his system rests, since that is not accepted upon blind faith, but stands on the secure platform of reason and of common-sense. He knows that the mighty scheme of evolution exists, although as yet our knowledge of it is imperfect; he knows that he is put here for a purpose, and that he ought to be trying to do his share in the work of the world. How then can he begin to fit himself to take that share? There comes in the question of the building of character.

A man sees himself to be fit or unfit as the case may be; to be fit in certain ways perhaps, but much hampered in others by characteristics which he possesses. There at once is an adequate motive for him to take himself in hand, when he realizes that his life is not for this short and fleeting period only, but for all eternity, when he sees that the conditions of the future days of this wider life will be modified by his actions now. He recognizes that he must so train himself as to be able to do this noble work which he sees opening up before him — that he must not waste his time in idleness or folly, because if he does he cannot sustain the part destined for him. He must learn, he must educate and develop himself in various ways in order that he may not fail in his ability to bear his share in the future that awaits us, in the glory that shall be revealed.

As to the stages in which this can be done, perhaps we can hardly do better than listen to the words of one of the mightiest of earth's teachers, whom I quoted to you in a previous lecture. You will remember that men asked the Lord Buddha to state the whole of his marvellous doctrine in one single verse; and that he replied in these memorable words:- "Cease to do evil; learn to do well; cleanse your own heart; this is the teaching of the Buddhas." Let us take up the building of character along the lines indicated by the golden words of the great Indian Prince, and see how thoroughly his single sentence covers the work of many lives.

Sabba papassa akaranam

"Cease to do evil." Let us look at ourselves carefully and thoughtfully, examine ourselves and see what there is in us that stands in our way, that prevents us from being perfect characters. We know the goal that is set before us; we who have read the Theosophical books now what is written there of the great Masters of Wisdom — of those men who are almost more than men, and of their glory, power, compassion, and wisdom. There is no mystery as to the qualifications of the adept; the steps of the path of holiness are fully described in our books, with the qualities which belong to each of them. What the Masters are, what the Buddha was, what the Christ was, that we must all some day become; we may therefore set before ourselves what is known of these exalted characters, and putting ourselves in comparison with them we shall see at once in how many ways we fall lamentably short of that grand ideal. Lamentably, yet not hopelessly, for these great Masters assure us that they have risen from the ranks in which we are now toiling, and that as they are now so

we shall be in the future; and whether that future be near or distant is a matter which is entirely in our own hands, and rests upon our own exertions.

The attempt to compare ourselves with these perfect men will at once reveal to us the existence of many faults and failings in ourselves which have long ago disappeared from them. Thus we commence our effort to obey the command of the Buddha. "Cease to do evil," by setting to work to eradicate these undesirable qualities. We have not far to look for them. Let us take, for example, the quality of irritability — a very common failing in a civilization such as ours, in which there is such a constant rush and whirl, and so much of nervous overstrain. Here is a prominent evil which must certainly be cast out. A man often thinks of himself as having been born with a highly-strung nervous organism, and therefore unable to help feeling things more keenly than other people; and so he expresses this additional sensitiveness by irritability. That is the mistake which he makes. It may be true that he is keenly sensitive; as the race develops many people are becoming so. Yet the fact remains that the man himself should remain master of his vehicles and not allow himself to be swept away by the storm of passion.

Astral Disturbance

This irritability is seen by the clairvoyant as liability to disturbance in the astral body. This astral body is a vehicle with which the man has clothed himself in order that he may learn through it. It cannot therefore fulfill its purpose unless he has it thoroughly under control. As the Indian books tell us, these passions and desires are like horses — in order to be useful to us they must be under the control of the mind who is the driver; and this driver himself must also be ready to obey the slightest order which comes from the true man who sits in the chariot directing the movement of these his servants. For the man to allow himself to be swayed or swept from his base by his passions and emotions, is to allow his horses to run away with him and to carry him whither they will instead of whither he will. It is for us to say whether we will allow ourselves to be mastered in this undignified manner by these feelings which should be our servants. We have the right and the power to say that this shall not be, and that these unruly horses shall be brought under control. It may be true that for a long time we have allowed them to have their own way until to yield to them instead of dominating them has become a fixed habit. Yet to learn

to manage them is the first step in the upward path; there can be no question that it will have to be taken, and the sooner it is taken the easier it will be.

It can never be too late to begin, and it is obvious that each time that the man yields himself makes it a little more difficult for him to resume the control later. The irritable man constantly finds himself succumbing to small annoyances, and under their influence saying and doing what afterwards he bitterly regrets. Strong though his resolve may be, again and again the old habit asserts itself, and he finds that he has said or done something under its influence before (as he would put it) he has had time to think. Still if he continues to make a determined effort at control, he will eventually reach a stage when he is able to check himself in the very utterance of the hasty word, and to turn aside the current of his annoyance when it is at its strongest. From that to the stage where he will check himself before he utters that word is not a long step, and when that has been gained he is near the final victory. Then he has conquered the outward expression of the feeling of irritation; and after that he will not find it difficult to avoid the feeling altogether. When that has been once done a definite step has been gained, for the quality of irritability has been weeded out, and it has been replaced by the quality of patience as a permanent possession, which the man will carry on with him into all his future births.

Conceit and Prejudice

Men have many failings which they hardly notice, yet if they carefully examine and judge themselves by sufficiently high standards they cannot help perceiving where they fall short. One of the commonest of all failings is self-conceit. It is so natural for a man to wish to think well of himself, to emphasize in his mind those points in which he considers he excels, and to attach undue importance to them, and at the same time to slur over almost without thought the many other points in which he falls short of other men. This self-conceit is a quality which needs to be carefully watched and steadily suppressed whenever it shows its head, for it is not only one of the commonest of all, but it is one of the most difficult to master; when conquered in one direction it reappears under some new guise in another. It is subtle and far-reaching, and it disguises itself with great success; yet until it is eradicated but little progress is possible.

Another weed which must be relentlessly torn up is prejudice. So often we are exceedingly intolerant of any new idea, of any other belief than our own; we are set and firm and dogmatic along certain lines, and unwilling to listen to truth. For example, we have our prejudices as to what we call morality, based exclusively upon conventional ideas; any suggestion which contravenes these, no matter how reasonable it may be, gives us such a shock that we lose our heads altogether, and become rabid and full of hatred, bitter and persecuting in our opposition to it. Many a man who thinks himself free from intolerance because he has no special religious belief is just as dogmatic along his own materialistic lines as the worst religious fanatic could be. Often a scientific man regards religion of all kinds with easy tolerance, considering it as something only fit for women and children. He looks down with amused superiority upon the horror with which one religious sect regards the opinions of another, and wonders why they should make so much fuss about a matter which can hardly be of serious importance one way or the other; and yet at the same time he has certain fixed ideas with regard to science, about which he is just as bigoted as are his religious friends in their dogmas. It does not occur to him that there is a bigotry outside of religion, and that in science, as well as in faith, a man's mind must always remain open to the advent of new truth, even though that truth may overthrow many of his own preconceived ideas.

Often this vice or prejudice is a subtle manifestation of that self-conceit to which I previously referred; the set of ideas which the man has adopted are his ideas and for that reason they must be treated with respect, and anything which tends to conflict with them cannot be entertained for a moment, because to receive it would be to admit that he may have been mistaken. Many a man has within him pettinesses, meanness, narrowness of mind, the existence of which he has not suspected; yet those qualities will manifest themselves when circumstances arise which call them into action.

Often, even when a man sees the manifestation of some such undesirable quality within himself, he to some extent excuses it by saying that it is after all natural. But what do we mean by this word natural? Simply that the majority of mankind would be likely under similar circumstances to display such a quality, and so the man in whom it manifests is an average man. Yet we should remember that if we are trying to take ourselves in hand and to build our character towards the high ideal which we have set

before us, we are aiming to raise ourselves above the average man, so that what is natural for him will not be sufficient in the higher life which we are now endeavouring to live. We must rise above that which is natural for the average of the race, and we must bring ourselves into a condition in which only that which is right and good and true shall be the natural course for us. We must eradicate the evil, and replace it by good, so that it is the expression of the latter which will instinctively show itself when we act without premeditation. If we are trying to realize the higher life, trying to make ourselves a channel through which the divine force may pour out upon our fellow-men, then that which is natural as yet for the majority will be unworthy of our higher aspirations. Therefore we must not excuse faults and failings in ourselves because they are natural, but we must set to work to make that natural to us which we desire to have within us; and this development also is entirely within our own hands.

Kusalassa upasampada

Sometimes the easiest way to carry out the first command "Cease to do evil" is to commence by trying to obey the second one "Learn to do well." If we wish to conquer an evil habit, it is sometimes easier and better for us to make strenuous efforts to develop within ourselves the opposite virtue. What are the qualities which are most necessary for us? If we can examine the matter without prejudice we shall find that very many of those which go to make the perfect man are as yet sadly lacking in us. Take first the very important quality of self-control. The majority of us are certainly deficient in this respect, and this fact shows itself in a dozen ways. The irritability of which I spoke previously is one of the commonest forms in which lack of self-control shows itself. There are other and coarser passions, such as the desire of the drunkard or of the sensualist, which most of us have already learned to control, or perhaps we have eliminated them from our natures in previous lives. But if any relics of such coarser passions still remain with us in the form of gluttony or sensuality, our first step must be to bring such desires under the dominion of the will.

In such cases as this the necessity is obvious to every one; but our lack of self-control may show itself in other ways which we do not so readily perceive. When some trouble, some sorrow or suffering comes to a man, he often allows himself to be greatly worried or profoundly depressed by

it. Instead of maintaining his attitude of calmness and serenity, he identifies himself with the lower vehicle, and allows himself to be swept away. He must learn to take a firm stand – to say to himself: “These forces from without are playing upon my lower vehicles, affecting perhaps my physical body or my astral body, but I, the Soul, the true Man, stand above all these things; I remain untroubled, and I will not allow myself to be disturbed or moved by them.”

The Foolishness of Taking Offence

Another instance which is painfully common is the way in which a man takes offence at something which another says or does. If you think of it this also shows a strange lack, not only of self-control, but of common-sense. What the other man says or does cannot make any difference to you. If he has said something that has hurt your feelings, you may be sure that in nine cases out of ten he has not meant it to be offensive; why then should you allow yourself to be disturbed about the matter? Even in the rare cases where a remark is intentionally rude or spiteful – where a man has said something purposely to wound another – how foolish it is for that other to allow himself to feel hurt! If the man had an evil intention in what he said, he is much to be pitied, since we know that under the law of divine justice he will certainly suffer for his foolishness. What he has said need in no way affect you; if a man strikes a blow on the physical plane, it is no doubt desirable for you to defend yourself against its repetition, because there is a definite injury; but in the case of the irritating word no effect whatsoever is really produced. A blow which strikes your physical body is a perceptible impact from outside; the irritating word does not in any way injure you, except in so far as you may choose to take it up and injure yourself by brooding over it or allowing yourself to be wounded in your feelings. What are the words of another, that you should let your serenity be disturbed by them? They are merely a vibration in the atmosphere; if it had not happened that you heard them, or heard of them would they have affected you? If not, then it is obviously not the words that have injured you, but the fact that you heard them. So if you allow yourself to care about what a man has said, it is you who are responsible for the disturbance created in your astral body, and not he. The man has done and can do nothing that can harm you; if you feel hurt and injured and thereby make yourself a great deal of trouble, you have only yourself to thank for it. If a disturbance arises within your astral body in reference to what he has said, that is merely because you have not yet

gained control over that body; you have not yet developed the calmness which enables you to look down as a soul upon all this and go on your way and attend to your own work without taking the slightest notice of foolish or spiteful remarks made by other men.

If you will attain this calmness and serenity, you will find that your life is infinitely happier than before. I do not put that before you as the reason for which you should seek this development; it is a good reason truly, yet there is another and higher reason in the fact that we have work to do for our fellow-men and that we cannot be fit to do it unless we are calm and serene. It is always best that we should keep before ourselves this highest of all reasons for self-development – that unless we evolve ourselves we cannot be a fit and perfect channel for the divine power and strength. That should be our motive in our effort; yet the fact remains that the result of this effort will be greatly increased happiness in our work. The man who cultivates calmness and serenity soon finds the joyousness of the divine life pervading the whole of existence. To the clairvoyant who can observe the higher bodies the change in such a man is remarkable and beautiful to see.

The Evil of Unnecessary Agitation

The average man is usually a centre of agitated vibration; he is constantly in a condition of worry or trouble about something, or in a condition of deep depression, or else he is unduly excited in the endeavour to grasp something. For one reason or another he is always in a state of unnecessary agitation, generally about the merest trifle. Although he never thinks of it, he is all the while influencing other people around him by this condition of his astral body. He is communicating these vibrations and this agitation to the unfortunate people who are near him; and it is just because millions of people are thus unnecessarily agitated by all sorts of foolish desires and feelings that it is so difficult for the sensitive person to live in a great city or to go into any large crowd of his fellow-men. An examination of the illustration of the effect of the various emotions are shown in Man Visible and Invisible will at once enable us to realize that a man in such a condition of agitation must be causing great disturbance in the astral world about him, and we shall see that others who happen to be in his neighbourhood cannot remain unaffected by the influence which pours out from him. The man who gives way to passion is sending out waves of passion; the man who allows himself to fall into a condition of

deep depression is radiating in all directions waves of depression; so that each of these men is making life harder for all those who are so unfortunate as to be near him.

In modern life every man has little circumstances which worry him, which tend to stir up irritability within him; every man has sooner or later some cause for worry and for depression; and whenever any one of us yields to either of these feelings the vibrations which we send out assuredly tend to accentuate the difficulties of all our neighbours. Such vibrations make it harder for those about us to resist the next accession of irritability or depression which may come to them; if there are germs of these qualities in them, the vibrations which we have so wrongly allowed ourselves to send forth may awaken these germs when otherwise they would have lain dormant. No man has a right to commit this crime of throwing obstacles in the way of his fellow-men; no man has a right to yield himself to depression or to give way to anger – not only because these things are evil for him and wrong in themselves, but because they do harm to those around him.

On the other hand, if we cultivate within ourselves serenity, calmness, and joyousness, we make life lighter instead of darker for all those into whose presence we come; we spread about us soothing vibrations, we make it easier for our neighbours to resist worry or trouble or annoyance, and thus we help to lift the burdens from all those who are about us, although we may say never a word to them. Every one is the better because we are calm and strong, because we have realized the duty of the soul. Here, then, are some useful qualities which we may seek to build into ourselves – the qualities of self-control, happiness, and calmness. Let us learn that it is our duty to be happy, because God means man to be happy. Therefore it is that the man must not let himself be swept off his feet by the waves of thought and feeling about him, but must stand firm as a tower to which others may cling who are still affected by these waves. So shall divine strength flow through him to those others, and they too shall be rescued from the stormy ocean of life, and brought into the haven where they would be.

Courage and Resolution

Other virtues which we should build into ourselves are courage and determination. There are many men in the world who have an iron

determination within them about certain things – a resolution that nothing can shake. They have resolved to make money, and they will do it – honestly, if possible, but at any rate they will make it; and these men usually succeed to a greater or less extent. We who are students of a higher life think of them as narrow in their outlook, as understanding but little of what life really is. That is true, yet we should remember that they are at least living up in practice to what they understand. The one thing of which they feel certain is that money is a great good, and that they intend to have plenty of it; and they are throwing their whole strength into that effort. We have convinced ourselves that there is something higher in the world than the gaining of money, that there is a vaster and a grander life, the smallest glimpse of which is worth more than all mere earthly gain. If we are as thoroughly convinced of the beauty of the higher life as is the worldly man of the desirability of making money, we shall throw ourselves into the pursuit of that higher life with exactly the same resolution and enthusiasm with which he throws himself into the pursuit of gold. He neglects no possibility, he will take infinite pains to qualify himself to pursue his object better; may not we often learn a lesson from him as to the one-pointedness and the untiring energy with which he devotes himself to his object? True, the object itself is an illusion, and when he gains it he often finds it to be of but little value after all; yet the qualities which he has developed in that struggle cannot but be valuable to him when the higher light dawns upon him and he is able to turn his talents to a better use.

In this development of resolution the study of Theosophy greatly helps us. The Theosophist realizes profoundly the infinity of work in the direction of self-development which lies before him; yet he can never be depressed, as the worldly man sometimes is, by the feeling that he is now growing old, that his time is short, and that he cannot hope to attain his end before death puts a period to his effort. The student of occultism recognizes that he has eternity before him for his work, and that in that eternity he can make himself exactly what he desires to be. There is nothing that can prevent him. He finds around him many limitations which he has made for himself in previous lives; yet with eternity before him all these limitations will be transcended, his end will be accomplished, his goal will be attained.

There are many people who are anxious to know what the future has in store for them – so many that large numbers of swindlers live upon this

desire. Any astrologer or clairvoyant who thinks he can predict the future is certain to have immense numbers of clients; even the veriest charlatan seems to be able to make a living by a mere pretence to the occult arts or to prevision. Yet in truth no one need trouble himself in the slightest degree about his future, for it will be exactly what he intends that it shall be. The student of occultism does not seek to know what the future has in store for him; he says rather: "I intend to do this or that; I know what my future development will be, because I know what I intend to make it. There may be many obstacles in my way, put there by my own previous actions; I do not know how many there are, or in what form they may come; I do not even care to know. Whatever they may be, my resolution is unshaken; whether it be in this life or in future lives, I shall mould my existence as I like; and in knowing that, I know all that I care to know of that which lies before me." When the man realizes the divine power which resides within him he cares little for outward circumstances; he decides upon what he will do; he devotes his energy to it and he carries it through; he says to himself: "This shall be done; how long it will take matters nothing, but I will do it." It will be seen therefore that courage and determination are virtues which are emphatically necessary for the student of occultism.

The Greatest Need of All

Most of all man needs to develop the quality of unselfishness; for man as we find him at present is by nature terribly selfish. In saying that, we are not casting blame upon him for his past; we are trying to remind him that there lies before him a future. The Theosophist understands why this fault of selfishness should be so common among men, for he realizes what has been the birth and the growth of the soul in man. He knows that the individual was slowly, gradually formed through ages of evolution, and consequently that the individuality is very strongly marked in man. The soul as a centre of strength has grown up within the walls of self, and without these protecting walls the man could not have been what he now is. But now he has reached the stage where the powerful centre is definitely established, and consequently he has to break down this scaffolding of selfish thought which surrounds him. This shell was a necessity, no doubt, for the formation of the centre; but now that the centre is formed the shell must be broken away, because while it exists it prevents the centre from doing its duty, and from carrying out the work for which it was formed. The man has become a sun, from which the

divine power should radiate upon all those around him, and this radiation cannot be until the walls of selfishness have been broken down.

It is not wonderful that it should be hard for man to do this, for in getting rid of selfishness he is conquering a habit which he has spent many ages in forming. It had its use and its place in these earlier stages; as one of the Masters of Wisdom once put it: "The law of the survival of the fittest is the law of evolution for the brute; but the law of intelligent self-sacrifice is the law of development for man." So it comes that man needs to transcend what was formerly his nature and to build into himself the quality of unselfishness, the quality of love, so that he may learn gladly to sacrifice what seems his personal interest for the good of humanity as a whole.

Let us beware that we do not misunderstand this. I do not mean by that any development of cheap sentimentalism. Men who are new to this study sometimes think that it is expected of them that they shall attain to the level of loving all their brethren alike. That is an impossibility even if it were desirable; and to see that this is so we have only to turn to the example of the highest of men. Remember that it is related of Jesus himself that he had his beloved disciple St. John, and of the Buddha that he was more closely attached to the disciple Ananda than to many others who possessed greater powers and higher advancement. It is not demanded of us, it is not intended, that we should have the same feeling of affection towards all. It is true that such affection as we now feel towards those who are nearest and dearest to us, we shall presently come to feel for all our brother-men; but when that time comes our affection for those whom we love best will have become something infinitely greater than it is now. It will mean that our power of affection has grown enormously, but not that it has ceased to be stronger in one case than it is in another – not that all the world has become the same to us.

What is important for us now is that we should regard all mankind, not with hostility, but in that friendly attitude which is watching for an opportunity to serve. When we feel deep affection or gratitude towards some person we watch constantly for an opportunity to do some little thing for him to show our gratitude, our respect, our affection, or our reverence. Let us adopt that attitude of ready helpfulness towards all mankind; let us be always prepared to do whatever comes to our hand –

ever watching for an opportunity to serve our fellow-men and let us regard every contact with another man as an opportunity of being useful to him in some way or other. In that way we shall learn to build into our character these important virtues of love and unselfishness.

Single-mindedness

Another necessary quality is that of single-mindedness. We must learn that the great object of our lives is to make ourselves a channel for the divine force, and that that object therefore must always be the determining factor in any decision that we make. When two paths open before us, instead of stopping to consider which of these two would be best for us individually, we must learn to think rather which is the noblest, which is the most useful, which will bring most good to other men. When in business or in social life we take some step which appears advantageous for us we should ask ourselves in all sincerity, "Can this thing, which seems as though it would bring good to me, do some harm to some one else? Am I making an apparent gain at the cost of a loss to some other man? If that be so I will have none of it; I will not enter upon any such course of action. For that cannot be right for me which brings harm to my brothers; I must never raise myself by trampling down others." Thus we must learn in everything to make the highest our criterion, and steadily little by little to build these virtues into ourselves. The process may be a slow one, but the result is sure.

Sachitta pariyodapanam

Nor must we forget the third line of the Buddha's verse: "Cleanse your own heart". Begin with your thoughts; keep them high and unselfish, and your actions will follow along the same line. What is required is intelligent adaptation to the conditions of the true life. Here on the physical plane we have to live in accordance with the laws of the plane. For example, there are certain laws of hygiene, and the intelligent man adapts himself carefully to them, knowing that if he does not his life will be an imperfect one and full of physical suffering. Every cultured man knows that to be the merest common-sense; yet we see daily how difficult it is to induce the ignorant and uneducated to comply with these natural laws. We who have learnt them adapt ourselves to them as a matter of course, and we realize that if we did not do so we should be acting foolishly, and if we suffered from such action we should have only ourselves to blame.

We who are students of occultism have through our studies learnt much of the conditions of a higher and grander life. We have learnt that just as there are certain physical laws which must be obeyed if the physical life is to be lived healthily and happily, so there are the moral laws of this higher and wider life, which it is also necessary to obey if we wish to make that life happy and useful. Having learnt these laws, we must use intelligence and common-sense in living according to them. It is with a view of adapting ourselves to them that we watch ourselves with reference to these qualities of which we have spoken. The wise man takes them one at a time, and examines himself carefully with reference to the quality which he has chosen, to see where he is lacking in it. He thinks beforehand of opportunities for displaying that quality, yet he is always ready to take other unexpected opportunities when he finds them opening up before him. He keeps that quality, as it were, in the back of his mind always, and tries perseveringly from day to day, and every moment of the day, to live up to his highest conception of it. If he thus keeps it steadily before him, he will soon find a great change coming over him; and when he feels that he has thoroughly grounded himself in that, so that its practice has become a habit and a matter of instinct with him, he takes up another quality and works in the same way with that.

No Morbid Introspection

That is the method of procedure, yet we must be careful in adopting it not to fall into a common error. We may remember that the Buddha advises his disciples to follow the middle Path in everything, warning them that extremes in either direction are invariably dangerous. That is true in this case also. The ordinary man of the world is asleep in regard to the whole of this question of the cultivation of character; its necessity has never dawned upon his horizon, and he is blankly ignorant with regard to it. That is one extreme, and the worst of all. The other extreme is to be found in the constant morbid introspection in which some of the best people indulge. They are so constantly mourning over their faults and failings that they have no time to be useful to their fellow-men; and so they cause themselves unnecessary sorrow and waste much strength and effort while making but little progress. A little child who has a piece of garden for himself is sometimes so eager to see how his seeds are growing that he digs them up before they have really started in order to examine them again, and so effectually prevents them from springing at all. Some good people seem to be just as impatient as is such a child; they

are constantly pulling themselves up by the roots to see how they are growing spiritually, and in this way they hinder all real advancement.

Self-examination and self-knowledge are necessary; but morbid introspection is above all things to be avoided. Often it has its root in a subtle form of self-conceit – an exaggerated opinion of one's importance. A man should set his face in the right direction; he should note his faults and failings, and strive to get rid of them; he should note the good qualities in which he is lacking, and endeavour to develop them within himself. But when he has formed this firm resolve, and in doing his best to carry it into effect, he can well afford to forget himself for the time in the service of his fellow-men. If he will but throw himself into earnest unselfish work, in the very act of doing that work he will develop many useful qualities. Having controlled the mind and the senses, let him think often of the highest ideals that he knows; let him think what the Masters are, what the Buddha is, what the Christ is, and let him try to mould his life toward theirs; let him work always with this end in view, and let him try to raise himself towards "the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ." Remember that he told us, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." Remember also that he would never have uttered those words if it had not been possible for man to fulfil that command. Perfection is possible for us because immortality is a fact; we have all eternity before us in which to work, and yet we have no time to lose; for the sooner we begin to live the life of the Christ, the sooner we shall be in a position to do the work of the Christ, and to range ourselves among the saviours and the helpers of the world.



CHAPTER 12. THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY

The subject of the future that lies before humanity may be treated in various ways; perhaps the simplest division which we can make is to speak first of the immediate future, then of the remoter future, then of the final goal. Both the immediate and the remoter future may be to some extent a matter of speculation, or perhaps we should rather say of calculation; but the final goal we know with absolute certainty, and that is the only thing which is really of importance. Still it is well that we should try to look forward a little, so that we who are units in this great mass of humanity may be able to take our part intelligently in the evolution which we see to be progressing all round us.

The conditions of the near future must naturally develop from those which we see today; and I think that as we look about us, unless we are terribly prejudiced, we must admit that in spite of our boasted civilization there is much which is highly unsatisfactory. Europe and America, with some of the English colonies, include between them the highest levels yet gained by this civilization of ours; yet we can hardly say with truth that in any of these countries the condition of affairs is at all what we would wish to see it. In every direction we see lamentable failures, although in certain matters there may be success and progress.

The Condition of Religion

Think of the condition in any or all of these countries of one of the most important factors of human life – religion. Wherever we may look all over the world we shall find religion in an unsatisfactory condition. That may be considered a bold and sweeping statement, yet I think examination will show that it is true. In all these which we consider the most advanced countries religion has now but little hold over the masses of the people. In some of the great Oriental lands it still holds sway, but even there it has become largely tinged with superstition, or else the people are atheistic and care for none of these things. In the Catholic countries of Europe the faith has terribly degenerated, and in some cases the grossest superstition is almost all that is left of it. In the countries which boast of themselves as belonging to reformed sects of various kinds the bulk of the people are paying no attention to religion at all, and if we turn to the educated classes or the cultured people in any of these countries, whether catholic or sectarian, we shall find that they are for the most part sceptical in their

habits of thought. Sometimes they are openly sceptical in words also, but more frequently they profess some religion as a matter of course and of respectability, yet it is in no way a real or serious factor governing their every-day life.

Surely this is not a satisfactory state of affairs; for unless there is something of the nature of religion or philosophy to lead men's thoughts away from the lower world to something grander and better and more enduring, the condition of a country can never be what it should be; and if that be so we must admit that in that direction at any rate there is much to be desired all over the world. Religion has given far too largely faith instead of knowledge; it has given us some hope, perhaps, but no certainty; it has put before us dogmas and authoritative statements, but little of clear reason, little that can be definitely comprehended; and that is why many of the most cultured people find themselves believing in it in only a half-hearted way, even if they are able to accept its conclusions at all.

Social Conditions

Again, if we examine the social conditions of the world, we must once more admit that things are far from satisfactory; for although there are those who push to the front and make enormous fortunes, there are also masses of people who are still steeped in poverty and in ignorance. This is not only of the backward countries of the world but to a great extent also even of those which are considered the most advanced; so that those who would try to help and to reform stand aghast at the sight and know not where to begin. In every country we see society more or less at war with itself, race against race, where there are different races, class against class, labour against capital, and sometimes even sex against sex. Everywhere seems to be the clash of warring interests, and so people range themselves on opposite sides. Then the question of government is also in an unsatisfactory condition; for I think all will agree that there is no country in the world which is governed, as every country in the world ought to be, solely with regard to the interests and advancement of the people who are governed. On the contrary we find everywhere personal and party considerations, and matters are in such condition that even the wisest and the best of our statesmen cannot do many things which they wish to do, and find themselves forced into many actions of which in truth they do not approve.

All of these difficulties arise from ignorance and selfishness. If men understood the plan of evolution, instead of working each for his own personal ends they would all join together as a community and work harmoniously for the good of all with mutual tolerance and forbearance. It is obvious that if this were done all of these evils would almost immediately cease, or at any rate could very shortly be removed. Even now there is a strong wave of feeling in the world tending in that direction, because every day a greater number of people are beginning to understand to some extent and to strive towards a better and more rational condition of affairs. There are many societies and associations which have for their object the amelioration of the condition of humanity. Some of them begin at one end and some at the other; each approaches it from his own point of view and with his own set of remedies, but at least they are striving towards that development of unselfishness which is the only true solution of all our difficulties.

The Work of Theosophy

Our own Theosophical Society is one of such organizations, for it is striving to help humanity. It has no connection with any form of politics, and is not trying to act directly in any way with regard to social conditions; its effort is rather to dispel ignorance, to put before men the truth about life and death, to show them why they are here and what lessons they have to learn, and so to bring them to understand and to realize the great truth of the brotherhood of man. Already much work has been done in that direction – work of which but little is known in America, because most of it has not been in this hemisphere. Though you have people of many different races in this country, you are gradually welding them all together into one race; so that it can hardly be said that any racial antagonisms exist, except, perhaps, that in the South between the whites and the Negroes. In Europe, however, there is still strong national feeling, and I am afraid much national misunderstanding. But it is a striking and interesting thing to see one of the conventions of the Theosophical Society here, at which are present men from all these races which so often misunderstand and suspect one another. It is pleasant and encouraging to see how all these men meet as brothers, how the racial differences and antagonisms have disappeared, and how unfeignedly they all rejoice to see one another. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that if Theosophy spread gradually among these various nations, if the majority, or even a large minority, of each nation understood and

accepted the Theosophical ideas, anything like war between such nations would be impossible. All of them realize perfectly that the matters of the physical plane are of minor importance, and that all points connected with it can be easily settled if there is goodwill on both sides and an endeavour to discover the right and to do justice.

It only needs that men shall come to know and to understand one another, in order that they may also come to respect one another. A man of one nation may feel a prejudice against men of another nation in the abstract, and may retain this prejudice so long as he knows none of them intimately. The moment he comes into close relationship with them as friends, he discovers that they also are human beings with the same good qualities and the same faults and failings as his own countrymen, and inevitably these discoveries change his point of view with regard to them. He still retains his patriotism, his love of country and his own ideas upon many points, but he realizes that these others are also brothers and that although there may be many points upon which they differ yet there are far more in which this common brotherhood of humanity makes them agree. There you have a living example of the way in which, when ignorance is dispelled and greater knowledge is attained, a comprehension of the brotherhood follows and many dangers and difficulties are at once removed.

Its Work in the East

Even more striking results of the work of the Theosophical Society are to be seen in the East. I have seen several of the great Conventions of our Society at its headquarters in India; and it is a magnificent thing to see the scores of different races which come together there, representing in some cases religions which have been separated for thousands of years. These members may come from races which have hereditary antagonisms, or from faiths which regard one another as heretical, yet here at the Theosophical Convention they stand side by side, each one acknowledging the other's claim to tolerance and brotherly treatment, each admitting the other to be in every way equal to himself.

I remember when the Sanskrit library was opened there at the Theosophical headquarters at Adyar, the President-Founder invited the representatives of all the great religions to come together and join in a kind of service of consecration or benediction. It was the first time in

history, so far as we know, in which priests or preachers of these different faiths had met in this way on a common platform, each receiving the other as an equal, each sharing by their presence in the ceremonies of the other religions. We had there a Hindu Pujari from one of the principal temples; we had two prominent Buddhist monks from Ceylon; we had Parsee Mobeds from the neighbourhood of Bombay, and we had prominent Mohammedans from Central India; yet all these men joined together in fraternal accord. The only great religion not represented on that occasion was the Christian, and that was not the fault of our President, for he had sent invitations to leading Christians to take part in the ceremony, but in reply they could only regret that the others among whom they were asked to officiate were heathens, and that consequently they were unable to appear beside them upon a common platform.

The Two Great Churches of Buddhism

Another striking result of the work of the Society – a piece of work for which especial credit should be given personally to its indefatigable President – was the bringing into closer touch of the Northern and Southern churches of Buddhism. Here were two sections of the great Buddhist religion, standing in somewhat the same relation to one another as the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Church – divisions which have been separated for many centuries, which had gradually grown more and more apart in doctrine and ritual. It was the President of the Theosophical Society to whom the idea occurred of drawing up a document containing certain grand common principles, to which he invited the assent of the heads of both these churches; and he visited the various countries concerned, obtained the signature of all the great dignitaries to this common document and thereby brought into intimate relation those who before had regarded one another with a certain amount of distrust and suspicion. Through his exertions also young students of the Northern church were sent to study under some of the leading monks of the South, so that there might be an ever increasing number of men in each of these churches who knew something directly and practically of the other.

To many of you all this means comparatively little, because you have no idea of the enormous importance of the interest concerned and of the numbers of people involved. It would no doubt be quite a marvellous achievement to bring together the Pope of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to induce them each to acknowledge the other as his

equal and as in every way as true a representative of original Christianity as himself. Yet this which was achieved by the President of our Society was in reality a matter on a much larger scale than that, for the numbers belonging to the two Buddhist churches far exceed those of the adherents of all the different sects of Christianity put together. So that it may certainly be said that already this Society of ours has done something towards the promotion of its first object, the Brotherhood of Humanity.

The Lessons to Be Learned

There is no country in the world where the work of the Society is not needed, for in every land there is much that this real knowledge of one another can do to bring the different sections of the community into greater harmony, to bring men to join together and to recognize the eternal brotherhood of all, to lead them all together towards the pursuit of high ideals and to teach them to discriminate the real from the unreal, to show them what objects are worth following and what are of minor importance. The study of these mighty truths will increase not only within our Theosophical Society but outside of it also. It matters but little by what name we call it; if the study of truth and the endeavour to realize these higher ideals spread abroad over the country we shall find that they carry peace and understanding and loving kindness in their train, and then presently we shall see a new and grander religion springing up which all may accept with equal freedom.

There are many lessons which we may learn from history. The leading countries of the earth think of themselves as embodying a great and advanced civilization, and we are apt to imagine that never before in the world has there been anything like the knowledge which we now possess. Along certain lines, perhaps, this may be true; yet there have been other mighty civilizations which have arisen and flourished and disappeared in turn. Their history is an image of our own, and their fate must one day overtake us also, however improbable that may appear to us now. In the magnificent civilization of Atlantis a level of universal prosperity for all was attained which we certainly have not yet reached, and that condition in their case was stable and lasted for thousands of years. But to that great race came also the test that comes to all nations, when the fuller truth gradually dawns upon them, and when their people come to know the possibility of powers higher than the physical plane. The nation of

Atlantis misused these powers; the majority there chose the path of selfishness and not of selflessness, and so Atlantis perished.

We are now repeating the earlier part of their history; we are increasing in wealth and in prosperity, and we are gradually tending towards the world wide domination which was held by Atlantis. Many among us are now beginning to obtain glimpses, at any rate, of these higher powers; and the knowledge of them and the possession of them will steadily spread among us. So we are closely repeating the history of Atlantis; and the question for us is whether having thus reproduced the earlier part of it we are about to follow its example in the latter part – whether after repeating the glory and expansion of the world-wide empire, we are going also to repeat the disgrace and the downfall. Whether that will happen to the present civilization of the world or not depends largely upon the men of today, the men who are here at the beginning of the new order of things.

The Preparation of Our Future

In America especially glimpses of psychic development are common; and undoubtedly they will form a characteristic of the great new race which is to arise out of the intermixture of many nations which is taking place there. We are in truth assisting in the birth of a nation, and we must remember that a birth of a nation has many points in common with the birth of a child. We know that the future of the child depends largely on the thought and character of those who surround it in its earliest years, both before and after the moment of its birth. Just in the same manner the men of the present day have their part to play in the foundation of this new race, in the preparation of the future that awaits us.

In this preparation we who are studying the truths of Theosophy have our part to play. If we realize something of these higher truths, if we understand the necessity of high and spiritual ideals, now is the time for us to try to spread this knowledge of the truth and to put it forward in a common-sense way before those who can understand it wherever opportunity offers. We must offer them this higher belief, based not upon dogmas or sacred books, but upon sound reason and common-sense, reasoning steadily upward step by step from things clearly known and recognized by science to those which as yet are known only to the few. If we can succeed in doing this we shall help in securing for this immediate

future a development of good and not of evil. We must remember that it is the power of our thought and the power of our action, as well as the power of our speech, which will produce its effect in these matters.

Never was there a greater need for the diffusion of knowledge, for in the present ignorance of men there is a real and imminent danger. We have in the immediate future the possibility of serious struggle; we have all the elements of a possible social upheaval, and we have no religion with sufficient hold upon the people to check what may develop into a wild and dangerous movement. As yet philosophy is the study of the few only, and the science which has done so much for us, and has achieved so many triumphs, cannot stay the danger which threatens us. The only thing that can prevent it is the diffusion of knowledge, so that men shall understand what is really best for them and shall realize that nothing can ever be good for one which is against the interest of the whole.

Development Must Come

That change and development must come is certain; the only question is how it shall come – how the new order shall replace the old with as little friction and as little suffering as possible. Material and philosophical science must be perfected, until every natural force is subjugated to man's service; knowledge will grow until it rends the veil from every secret in the boundless fields of hitherto unknown truth; idyllic social economics will follow in the wake of individual refinement until there is nothing left to fight for, and hardly anything left to sigh for; for in all the world needless sorrow and suffering and death will be known no more. The gaunt spectre of loathsome disease will be laid forever by the awakened might of physiological science, so that men will die only in the fullness of their days, and may well be enabled to condense into one incarnation such development as now spreads itself over two or three. The ghastly monster of ruthless war will be smitten by the fiery sword of intellectual power, the sordid demon of grinding fruitless toil, with its attendant imps of starvation, degradation, and moral death, will be bound in chains by the mighty arm of moral responsibility, and human beings will no longer be treated as a little lower than the beasts of the field. Education will pierce the viscid depths of poverty, and will raise even the humblest of the human race into the self-respecting, self-restraining ranks of the men who know.

All this must surely come; as the sense of duty spreads among men, it will draw forth the rich man from his selfish isolation to employ the talents which have been given him for the helping and the uplifting of his fellows; the extremes of wealth and poverty will be alike impossible, for the simpler and the purer life must take the place of all the present unnecessary complications. This is in our future, and I hope it may be the near future; but how it shall come depends largely upon the extent to which the light of truth can be spread through the world now. There is no time to waste, for the forces of discontent and danger are daily growing, and at any moment some spark may light a conflagration, the extent of which no man can foresee.

The Remoter Future

We can speak with greater certainty as to the remoter future than we can with regard to that which is more immediately impending. The study of the earlier ages of humanity and a comparison of their conditions with the state of affairs at the present day shows us the direction in which evolution is moving; so that there can be no question that after a certain considerable lapse of time qualities which are now only just beginning to dawn will be fully developed, and all the conditions of society will be radically changed thereby. There can be no uncertainty with regard to this; but the intermediate steps through which we must pass are not so clearly defined. I have often had occasion to speak of the possession by man of the astral and mental bodies, and of the development within some of us of the senses of these bodies, so that they have become what is commonly called clairvoyant. Those who possess these faculties now are those who have turned their attention especially to them either in this life or in some previous existence; but the faculties are the heritage of every human being, and the race is moving steadily towards their fuller development.

I have explained in the concluding chapter of *The Other Side of Death* how the man who wishes for the use of these faculties may proceed to unfold them within himself. That process, however, is only an acceleration of what nature is gradually doing for us all; and the time is not far distant when a considerable portion of the higher races of mankind will possess them naturally and without any special effort. In America we have striking evidence that this statement is true, for the proportion of partially psychic men and women is far greater here than it is in any of the older nations

with the exception, perhaps, of some of the smaller and distinctly Keltic races, such as the Highlanders of Scotland. There must be many among my hearers or my readers who know from their own experience that what I am saying is true, and there must be many more who know it from the evidence of relations or friends who already possess these faculties to a greater or less extent. Although to the majority of mankind such faculties will come only gradually, yet we must remember that they will come with steadily increasing rapidity, because the more widely they are known, and the more they are in the air, the easier it will be for those to develop them in whom they are already near the surface.

Let us think then of the time when the majority of the men of advanced races will possess such endowments as these, and let us see what difference that will make in their lives. Naturally the development of astral sight will come first. To the advanced and trained clairvoyant the possession of astral sight is a small matter, for he can reach higher than that, and has much more extended powers at his command. But for the majority of people the possession of even this faculty would change the whole face of life. I remember once hearing Mrs. Besant speak on this subject; and she explained that there were three great parallel roads, as it were, along which men would progress – the paths of Power, Wisdom and Love. She said that if one examines these three roads, one may easily see for oneself what difference will be made in each of them when the higher faculties of man are developed. Under these three headings she grouped the various activities through which the powers of man could be manifested. Under the heading of love, for example, is grouped all that belongs to the religious aspect of life – our devotion towards those above us, towards the Great Ones, and towards the Deity, and also, on the other hand, our love and sympathy and helpfulness towards those around us or behind us in evolution. On the wisdom side of man's evolution we have his development along the lines of science, or philosophy, or art – developments at present perhaps somewhat rudimentary, yet they will be built into fuller and more perfect knowledge as time goes on. Under the power side of the man's development comes the whole question of government and of organization in all its aspects.

In all these lines of progress we are only at the beginning; and yet, though truly we have not advanced very far, it would seem as though in all of them we are coming to dead walls beyond which it is difficult for us to see our way. Even in science, whose triumphs have been so great, we appear

to be coming in many directions almost to the limit of what is possible for us. Science commences with the study of the material, and naturally its tendency is to be materialistic. Yet, it constantly finds itself transcending the material; as Mr. Fullerton has well remarked, "Hardly have we entered upon the examination of any phenomenon before we come to the borders of the unseen. We attempt the study of the expansive forces of steam. Yet steam is a vapour, visible only as it is chilled by the cooler atmosphere. We seek to discover what electricity is, to learn its actual nature, whether it is a current or a vibration. Yet in its one reality it eludes the keenest eye, and only can we examine its effects as they display themselves in the field of manifestation. Light, heat, gravitation, chemical affinity, what do we know of them in their essence, how do we know of them at all except as they emerge from the hidden world and produce some effect in the world of matter? Life itself we perceive only in its activities; what it is, the invisible force which sweeps over the world and through all things, we cannot define; not until its consequences palpably disclose themselves are we aware of its presence. And so with all the objects perceptible to the senses. But a very little way do we go in our examination before the senses are transcended, the border of the unseen is reached, and the examination is closed in powerlessness." (Proofs of Theosophy, p.2)

The Effect of Astral Development

Let us see then how the development of astral consciousness would affect mankind upon these various sides of their evolution. At present a large section of our people is still utterly uncertain as to whether there exists anything beyond the material; and a much larger section has no real belief in anything beyond the material, even though it may profess to have it. This uncertainty and practical scepticism would necessarily at once disappear if any large proportion of men possessed the faculties of the astral plane. The whole question of the survival of man after death, with all that depends upon it, would then no longer be arguable, for living men would see constantly around them those whom we call the dead. There could no longer be any scepticism as to the existence of the great Divine Power, for His action would be clearly visible to men in many ways. No man who is clairvoyant, who possesses a properly developed sight of the higher planes, can ever be an atheist. It is not that he sees God Himself, for as your scriptures tell you, "No man hath seen God at any time"; but he does see on all hands such direct evidence of a mighty scheme, of

tremendous power wielded by transcendent intelligence, that it is impossible for him to doubt the existence of the directing Deity. Many of the things about which men argue now will then be matters of knowledge, though no doubt there will still be much room for speculation with regard to other and higher matters.

The change will also be great with regard to what Mrs. Besant calls the love side of the evolution of man. Our relation and our obligation towards intelligences greater than ours, towards great teachers of the past and of the present, will be unquestioned, because we shall see and realize their power and influence. When we turn our thought in the other direction and think of our influence upon those about us and upon those below us, again we see what a vast difference must necessarily be made when there is an abundance of activity and of intelligent help, when every man who has gained this sight knows how to use it in dealing with his fellow-men, because he can see what they think and what they feel, and therefore he is no longer working blindly. A doctor will know what is the matter with his patient without having to make experiments, and so he will be able to prescribe just what is necessary for his recovery. Men will work intelligently for the helping of their fellows, and so all their efforts will be far better directed than they can be now.

Think what it will do for us in the education of our children when we have teachers who can see and understand. Now we inevitably apply methods of education somewhat loosely, not fully comprehending how great are the differences between the souls that come to us in these young bodies. But then with the higher sight will come intelligence and discrimination, so that no child shall be put into the wrong place, into a place that does no fit him; but in each case those who are responsible for his instruction and his guidance will see precisely for what he is fitted and will know exactly what he can do. The schoolmaster of that future day will watch the germs within his pupils as they unfold, and will work to repress the evil and develop the good. We may see how much of advancement might in this way be attained even in a single generation, if we think of all the people whom we know, and how different they would be if all the undesirable qualities which they possess were eliminated, and all the good ones enormously strengthened. Such an ideal society as that could be brought into existence and could be universally extended in two or three generations, if parents and teachers were able to see and to act intelligently. Even now without the development of the astral sight there

is much that may be done, if parents and guardians and teachers will only read and learn for themselves about these things.

On the wisdom side of man's evolution this new sight would make a wonderful change. As I have said, there are now many limitations for the scientific man in almost every direction. He has improved and refined and specialized his instruments to a wonderful pitch of perfection, and yet the highest that he can reach falls short of so much that needs to know. He talks about and he works with his atoms and his molecules, and yet no man living has ever by means of any scientific instrument seen an atom or a molecule. These things can be seen by the developed clairvoyant sight – I do not mean by ordinary clairvoyance such as that which is frequently advertised in the newspapers, but by definitely trained clairvoyance or rather by a special application of that sight. This power of magnification has apparently always been understood in the East – at least we find reference to the possession of this power in some of the earlier Hindu books. By its means the various atoms and molecules postulated by science may be seen to be not merely hypotheses but facts. Here then is a grand possibility lying before the chemist of the future. He will not merely theorize, but as he mixes his various chemicals he will watch the combinations and the changes, and will therefore understand far more clearly what he is doing. As we said before, the doctor will then diagnose by direct vision, and not by mere inference from external symptoms. Now in many cases he administers his drugs to counteract these external symptoms merely, and he hopes that the results of some at least of them may be satisfactory; then he will be able to see the effect of each drug in various cases and can observe and test it fully.

Another department in which a great difference will certainly be made is psychology. Now men argue much about the degree to which consciousness is developed in animals, and how it works at different stages of human evolution. Then there will be no need for them to argue about such matters, because they will be able to see how the consciousness works, and it will be within their power to identify themselves for the moment with the consciousness of an animal, so that they may know what it is and how its strange limitations act. The increase of our knowledge cannot but be wonderful, yet it is certain that this must come, since it is directly in line with the development which has already come to us and since the powers by which it will be gained have already unfolded themselves to some of us. There are many among us who have

seen really highly developed men – those whom we call the Masters of Wisdom; and we see that they possess all these qualities of which we speak. What they are now, all of us will presently be; and consequently we are not guessing or speculating when we speak of this remoter future, but we are describing the inevitable advancement of the human race.

In the field of philosophy the plainest of facts will replace many of the theories of the present day. No doubt our metaphysicians will still continue to argue about matters far above any which even that higher sight can see; but, at any rate, they will have a definite basis, a foundation from which to start in their theories, and that cannot but make considerable difference to them. Another side of our knowledge which will be revolutionized will be the study of history, for one of the faculties belonging to these higher planes is the power of looking back into the records of the past. At present we must trust ourselves in the hands of the historian, who may be ignorant or mistaken and is almost necessarily more or less partial. Then we shall be able to look back at will upon these records of the Divine memory, which show everything that has been done or spoken or thought all over the world, so that instead of hearing only an imperfect account of one side of the story we shall be able to live at will amongst the civilizations of hundreds of thousands of years ago and see their action and working as clearly and vividly as that which is passing around us. Psychometry shows us even now that this is a possibility, and it is certain that this will be the way in which the future history will be written, so that we shall know, instead of vaguely guessing.

Our religious friends argue much about heaven and hell, and are terribly afraid of the latter; indeed it would sometimes almost seem as though they were afraid of the former as well, from the manner in which they exert themselves to avoid going there. In the future no questions or disputes about these conditions will be possible, because man will see for himself that there is no hell, though he will also see that those who live an evil life are by that fact storing up for themselves undesirable results and an unpleasant time in the astral life. The glories of the heaven-world will also be open to his sight, and he will realize that man needs only a development of faculty in order to place him at once, here and now, in the midst of all the bliss that wondrous life can give. Thus also with many points about which men argue in religion – about the verbal accuracy of the gospel stories and of other parts of what is called sacred history; in

those days the facts will be obvious, and there will be no longer room for argument.

What a change will come over our conceptions of art and music also! For the artist of that day there will be many more colours and many more shades of colour than those of which we now know, for the knowledge of the higher planes brings as one of its earliest results the power of appreciating different hues. The music of that day will be accompanied by colour, just as the colour studies will be accompanied by harmonious sound; for sound and colour are two aspects of every ordered motion, so that a magnificent piece played upon the organ will be accompanied by a splendid display of glowing colour, and thus another interest will be added to the delight of glorious music, and an additional advantage will in this way be enjoyed by the students of music and art.

A great change too will come over the power side of man's development; the whole question of government and organization will stand upon a different basis. Men will see then the effect upon the astral plane of many of their actions upon the physical, and thus much that is now done thoughtlessly will become an impossibility. There could be no possibility of the slaughter of animals for food, for example, if men were able to see the results upon the astral plane which that slaughter produces. The crime which men call sport would be abolished if they were able to see what it is that they are really doing. It needs so slight a development to change the whole face of this which we call civilization, and to change it greatly for the better.

The Faculty of the Mental Plane

Yet most of this of which I have spoken is only one stage of the development, and the first stage. Most of this, and in many lines much more than this, would follow from the unfolding of the merely astral sight in man; yet above and beyond that there lies the mental plane. I tried to give some faint idea of that when I spoke of the Heaven-world; yet I know well how far short all physical words must fall in the attempt to describe the splendour of the mental plane, so that now just as was the case two thousand years ago the only satisfactory statement that can be made about that celestial world is that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And remember, that

means for all, because all men will love the divine as soon as they know the divine. It is only because they are ignorant, because they cannot see, that some are now working for what they mistakenly consider their own separated interests, instead of following the line of the Divine will. They have only to see and know, and they will follow it and intelligently co-operate with it.

It must be remembered that in this distant future the life of the mental plane will be part, and the principal part, of our daily life. At present most of those who are able to enjoy the vision of the heaven-world can reach it only when the physical body is in a condition of trance. That is not the only way in which this can be seen, but we are so used to paying attention to the senses of the physical body and the impressions received through them, that while these are pressing upon us we are not free to listen to the whisperings from the higher worlds. But there comes to every man in the course of his evolution a time when he possesses his astral faculties along with the physical, and has them at his command all the while. Thus whenever he meets a friend he sees his astral body as well as his physical; and it is only a question of a further step in evolution to be able to see the mind-body as well. When this power comes to the man the mental plane is open to him, so that even while he walks the earth and takes part in his daily business he is yet living in heaven in very truth, for its powers are his, its knowledge is his, its bliss is his. That will be true for every one of us – not for all at first, nor for all simultaneously, because all men will not be equal in their development then, any more than they are now. There are younger souls and older souls, and those who belong now to savage races may by that time have developed to our present level; but we shall not have been standing still during the intervening period, and so we shall then have reached a far higher level than this. These things are today within the reach only of those who have especially studied in order to develop these faculties, but by that time they will be in the hands of the majority of the educated and cultured men of the advanced races.

The few who hold these powers now are, as it were, eyes for the rest of the race, and the use their powers only in the service of their brothers, and never for private gain. The man who has evolved so far as this knows that nothing can ever be a gain for one unless it is also in harmony with the advancement of all. He knows that there is no such thing as a private gain at another man's cost. Consequently he begins to see that the only true advantage is that gain which he shares with all; that every advance

that he makes in the way of spiritual progress or development is something gained not for himself alone but for others. If he gains knowledge and self-control he assuredly acquires much for himself, yet he takes nothing away from any one else. He may hand on his knowledge to others, and yet lose nothing; indeed the more of his knowledge he passes on in this way the more he is likely to acquire himself. If a man keeps the channel of his mind ever open and lets his knowledge flow through it for the benefit of others, then the way is open for fresh knowledge constantly to pour in from above, just as a stream of water flows through an open pipe, and it is always kept clean and pure. But if the knowledge flows into the man and is not passed through, then that man speedily becomes like the end of the pipe from which there is no outlet, in which the water becomes stagnant and is liable to be choked up with all manner of foulness and impurity. Of these true riches the more we give away the more we have for ourselves; and to win them is the only really useful acquirement of riches, if we can but understand it.

Still Higher Possibilities

So we see how development will proceed. The Theosophical student knows that beyond and above even the mental plane there lies that still higher realm which we call the buddhic, where the perfect unity of mankind is seen. There a man may know, not by mere intellectual appreciation, but by definite experience, the fact that humanity is a brotherhood because of the spiritual unity which underlies it all. Here, though he is still himself and his consciousness is his own, it has widened out into such perfect sympathy with the consciousness of others that he realizes that he is truly only part of a mighty whole. He sees how the evolution of that whole is steadily progressing, and how he must work towards that end without any thought of himself as a separate entity, since that is merely a delusion belonging to these lower planes. When we realize this one thing, we know also the splendid advancement that must come to man, for we see how it leads upwards to that final goal when man himself shall be as God, for every man's consciousness shall widen out into that Divine consciousness and shall be a centre of love and light and glory, the organizer and ruler and life-giver of a system, the creator of evolutions yet to come.

That is the future that lies before us, yet even that is not the final goal. It is the goal intended for us at the end of this stage in our evolution; yet

progress ends not with that. What lies beyond it in still higher realms of Divinity we know not now, but we shall know some day. No words can picture, no thought can reach it, yet that future is sure. The only thing that is not sure is how long we shall be in gaining it; yet we are on the way to it even now, and it is in the hands of the men of today to hasten our progress towards it. For we are of this humanity that is progressing – only a small part of it truly, yet not without power and not without responsibility; and if we intelligently bear our part in the work of today we can do much towards hastening the approach of this splendour which is so much greater than human words can say. This at least we can do; each one of us can make himself a centre, and try to do his best to spread the knowledge of the truth by his thought and word and deed; he can hold himself steady and calm and serene, he can keep the higher ideal before him, and never allow himself to be swept off his feet by waves of passion or by thoughts of selfishness. He can earnestly devote himself to the study of these higher truths, so that he may fully understand how best to work for them. Let him try do what we in this Theosophical Society are doing; let him try to advance and to aid the world by putting these truths before men, thus helping to bring nearer the time when all men shall understand one another, because they understand the mighty system of which they form a part.

This glorious future of which we speak is not the mere dream of a poet or ecstatic, it is a certainty beyond all doubt; it is a certainty because this evolution is God's will for man, and His kingdom shall come, and His will shall be done, on earth as it is in heaven.



CHAPTER 13. THEOSOPHY IN EVERY-DAY LIFE

In the course of this series of lectures we have spoken of many different subjects from the Theosophical point of view, in some cases explaining by means of Theosophy matters which otherwise seem wrapped in obscurity, in others telling you how various matters of religious interest appear when viewed through Theosophical glasses, with the added knowledge which Theosophy gives us. Now we have to consider how this same Theosophical knowledge affects us in every-day life. As you will have seen from the previous lectures, Theosophy gives us a definite point of view from which to regard everything; it is a clear and coherent theory of life, a system of philosophy through which we may look forth upon all the different problems that come before us, with the hope of being able to solve them, to understand what they mean, and what part they bear in relation to our lives. It is manifest that in our studies of higher subjects this will give us a great advantage; but how will it affect us in the somewhat dreary round of every-day life? We find that it makes a great change; in fact, the various ways in which Theosophy alters our attitude towards the world, toward our fellow-men and towards our evolution are so many, the whole subject is so large, and the difference which Theosophy makes to those who imbibe its teachings is so fundamental, that I can give you only the leading points of it in such a lecture as one can deliver in a single evening. If you think carefully, however, you will see that each of these points opens up a line of thought, and each of these lines has many ramifications.

The Sense of Proportion

The difficulty is to know where to begin and what to include, but perhaps we may take as our first great point the wider and calmer view which comes from this knowledge. The man who grasps the fundamental principles of Theosophy begins to see everything in different proportions, and necessarily learns to be much less personal in his view of affairs. Merely to hold the Theosophical ideas in the vague way in which much of modern theological faith is held would be of comparatively little use; but if a man really grasps the teaching, if it is vivid and lifelike to him, it certainly means a great alteration in his whole attitude. He will find that there is almost nothing which appeared in his life before, his view of which has not been much changed and greatly widened; in every way his

basis of thought and of life has been made different by the teaching of Theosophy.

The point of view of the average man is usually a limited and personal one. I am not thinking of a definitely selfish man – one who is unscrupulous in the pursuit of his own ends, and would push his personal interest regardless of direct and obvious injury to others. That is an unmistakably selfish man, and the ordinary man is less selfish than self-centred. He sees everything primarily as it affects him, and he does not as a rule naturally and instinctively look beyond himself to see how it affects the community at large. If that idea occurs to him at all, it is only as a second thought, and every problem presents itself to him first and foremost simply with reference to himself. That attitude cannot but be changed for the student of Theosophy; he realizes keenly the brotherhood of humanity, he sees vividly that we are all spiritually one upon higher planes, and that therefore even here in this physical world our true interests must be fundamentally one and the same.

We have already seen in other lectures that the only true gain for a man is that which he can share with all his brethren without thereby losing anything for himself; and we have also considered how the radiation of his thoughts and feelings affects those of his fellow-men. From this we may also see that if a man succeeds in conquering an evil quality in himself, and developing the opposite virtue, he necessarily helps those about him to tread the same path. While he indulged in some wrong thought or feeling, the vibrations which poured out from him were constantly acting as temptations to other men, and making it harder for them to control similar feelings in themselves. Now that he has gained the victory over that fault the vibrations which pour forth from him are of an opposite tendency, and consequently they help the man who is suffering under the same difficulty and strengthen him in his efforts to obtain the mastery over it. So it is true, and not a mere poetical figure of speech, to say that every victory which a man gains over himself is an advantage for all his brothers as well. In raising himself he has raised the whole – slightly of course, but not imperceptibly.

This sense of an underlying brotherhood, this feeling that he is one of a community, never leaves him. And therefore before he embarks upon any course of action he considers how it will affect others around him. He realizes vividly that his habits, his thoughts, and his feelings are not so

exclusively his own business as most people think, because they affect others for good or for evil, and thus he sees that there is a responsibility in all this of which the ordinary man never thinks of at all. We shall see that this imports a new factor into his life and makes it impossible for him to consider it otherwise than seriously.

I do not mean that he will feel sad about life; on the contrary he will be especially serene and calm and joyous. But along with his serenity and happiness there will be no frivolity. He cannot but have the sense that the life in which we are engaged is a serious business, that there are vast possibilities in it which it is within our power to realize, and that it has definite objects which we can have no right to neglect. Too often we find men frittering away their lives and wondering what they shall do to while away the time; whereas in reality we should rather ask ourselves how it will be possible for us to find time enough to do all that is waiting to be done. For our duty is never done while there is one person that we can reach who is unhelped, who is not being assisted in his progress. All about us opportunities are waiting for us in many different directions; and when a man once sees this, when he knows what life really is, he cannot but take it seriously. He sees that none of his time can be wasted with impunity, for all the while he is giving birth to thought, and that thought not only reacts upon himself but is constantly influencing others also. When he understands this he will be a far happier man than when he devotes his whole life to the pursuit of amusement; because he will see things in their proper proportion, and therefore he will be calm in the midst of sorrow and trouble, just because of his wider point of view, just because he realizes so thoroughly that everything is in the hands of an eternal and beneficent Power.

Justice and Perspective

The personal point of view of the average man brings with it as a necessary consequence a want of perspective with regard to his personal difficulties and sorrows. A small trouble will often, because it is so close to him, loom up so large as to obscure for him the entire horizon, so that he is unable to see that the sunlight of the divine Love still floods the world, even though a dark cloud may have settled over him. Because he is suffering, everything else seems altered; all life takes on a gloomy look, and he believes that he is the victim of some special misfortune, that he is selected as the sport of evil influences; whereas in reality the trouble is

but a small matter, but it is so near to him that it seems in his eyes larger than all else. Such an attitude is impossible for a man who has studied the Theosophical system, and realizes himself as part of the whole. He knows that under the unerring law of Divine justice if suffering comes to him, it comes because it is necessary for his evolution in consequence of actions which he has committed, of words which he has spoken, of thoughts to which he has given harbour in previous days and in earlier lives; and so the whole idea of injustice as connected with suffering is removed from him.

This feeling of injustice makes in many cases a large part of the suffering for man. Many men instinctively compare themselves with others, so that when any trouble or sorrow falls upon them they are inclined to grumble, and say to themselves, "Why should all this fall upon me? There are my neighbours whom I know to be no better than I, and yet they are flourishing; they did not lose their friends or their fortunes, they do not suffer from ill-health; they had not all the sorrows that are crowding so fast upon me." And so they feel that they are unjustly treated, and they resent it, and that attitude colours all their habit of thought; they become dissatisfied, discontented men, and instead of bearing their troubles patiently, they are always in a state of irritation, growing embittered and making the worst of it all instead of the best. All such feeling, all this which is so sadly common in the world, is swept away by the Theosophical teaching; for the student realizes that if his friends or his acquaintances are in better circumstances than himself, then either it is because they have deserved so to be, or else it is that their evolution at the present moment does not render it necessary for them, or well for them, that the trouble and the sorrow which they have stored up for themselves, should in immediate activity. So he takes his troubles philosophically, he rates them at their true value, and resolves to make out of these fruits of his evil doing in the past an opportunity for good in the present, by bearing them nobly and uncomplainingly, and developing under their action the virtues of determination, courage, and endurance.

A Dark Saying

There is yet another consideration which Theosophy puts before us which helps to make sorrow easier to bear. You may remember a strange text which tells us that "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." It is difficult, without a Theosophical explanation of it, either to accept or make any

sense out of such a text as that. Usually people try to explain it by attaching some vague idea of advantage to suffering in itself; they say that it is a good thing for a person that he should suffer, and that when God particularly loves any one He consequently causes them to pass through great sorrows in order that they may more quickly develop high qualities. It is true that such qualities as courage and endurance may be incidentally developed through suffering, as we have already said; but it is not true that the Deity exhibits caprice in this matter, and imposes this suffering upon one and not upon another, as though by favouritism. No suffering can come upon any man except that which is the result of his own action; and yet there is a truth hidden behind that strange text, which I will try to explain.

Those who have studied the Oriental scriptures will remember that in them this law of Cause and Effect is called by the name of Karma. This Sanskrit word karma is a verbal noun, literally signifying “doing”; but in the Oriental philosophy it bears three shades of meaning, important to be understood by anyone who wishes to have a comprehensive grasp of Eastern teachings. First, it sometimes means simply action; secondly, it means the result of action, the reaction upon the doer which sooner or later invariably and inevitably follows; thirdly, it means the law of nature under which this reaction takes place – the law of Cause and Effect, or the readjustment of equilibrium, which operates in the mental and moral worlds exactly as it does in mechanics.

They tell us that karma is of three kinds.

First: There is the Samchita, or “piled up” karma – the whole mass that still remains behind the man not yet worked out – the entire unpaid balance of the debit and credit account.

Second: There is the Prarabdha, or “beginning” karma – the amount apportioned to the man at the commencement of each life – his destiny, as it were, for that life.

Third: There is the Kriyamana karma, that which we are now by our actions in this present life making for the future.

We shall find this Eastern division helpful to us in our efforts to understand the subject. The first variety described is evidently the result

of all the man's previous thoughts and actions, both good and evil, which is hovering over him and waiting to come into operation. This is that self-imposed destiny which makes his life and surroundings such as they are according to his previous lives and actions. In one sense it may be regarded as a debt which he has to pay; yet it is far too great a debt to be paid in any one life, for in our earlier existences we are almost certain to have done on the whole a greater proportion of harm than good; in the savage period of our evolution we must necessarily have been ignorant and therefore our actions are likely to have been selfish and violent, and they must have left as their result much that is highly undesirable. It is because of this that the arrangement indicated in the second type of Karma is a necessity. Because the debt is too great to be paid at once, a certain proportion of it is allotted to the man in each life – a reasonable proportion with a fair balance of good and ill, so that he shall not be weighed down and crushed, but shall have the opportunity of making his way through life, even though it be with a struggle, and thus rising ever from the lower to the higher. We must never forget that the object of the scheme is man's evolution, and that consequently all the arrangements are intended to favour that evolution. No man therefore ever received more trouble than he can bear, although sometimes he may be tempted to think so; for if that were really the case evolution would be working to defeat itself, which is unthinkable.

The Balancing of Good and Evil

Since the man is steadily paying off more and more of this debt that lies behind him, there comes a time when the majority of the evil has already been worked out, when he has come nearly to the balancing of the evil and the good results of his past history. This point has not been reached by the majority of men; and yet there are some who are nearer to it than we may think, even though the lives of men are still far from being perfectly pure or noble or unselfish. This may perhaps seem strange to many; but we must take into consideration a fact which happily for us is prominent in our evolution – that, other things being equal, good is always a greater force than evil, and comparatively a little energy on the side of good often counterbalances a great deal turned into the lower levels of evil and selfishness. The reason for that is simple when we understand the physics of the higher planes. All that belongs to good, all that is high and pure and noble, expresses itself through the higher and more rapid vibrations. Let us take, for example, the astral body of man,

which is the vehicle of his desires, his passions, and his emotions. That astral body is a complex thing, for it is built up of many different kinds of astral matter. If a man has within him only high and unselfish desires and emotions, he will chiefly set into vibration the more refined matter of that astral body; if on the contrary his desires, emotions, and passions are coarse and selfish, almost the whole of them will express themselves in the lower, denser, grosser parts of that astral vehicle.

Note the result which follows. Supposing the man had an equal amount of good and evil desire, the good desire would be considerably more powerful, because it works in that finer matter where vibrations are so much more rapid, where force is so much more penetrating and enduring, because the matter through which it has to work its way is of a less gross character. The ordinary man's life contains a great deal which we cannot approve, a great deal that is coarse and selfish. Yet I believe that it always contains also something that is good, something that is noble, something that is really high and true; and this, comparatively little though it be, is a force working with such activity upon the higher planes that it fully counterbalances the coarseness and the selfishness; and so out of such a life there comes, not some retrogression, as one might expect, but a certain amount of progress. The ordinary life of the ordinary man (who is in no way particularly spiritual, but yet has his good points) is almost sure to bring him a little further forward at its end than he was at its beginning; so that there is progress in almost every life even for the man who is as yet comparatively undeveloped from the spiritual point of view. It follows from this that the moment a man really begins to train himself, and to have deep and strong spiritual thought, the good in his life enormously preponderates over the evil, and he commences to make rapid progress.

The true understanding of this changes the aspect of life for us all. We can no longer despair of the world or of evolution, when we realize how that evolution is working. We see what a stupendous strength lies behind it; how resistless is the law of God which is always moving onwards to good; and not only do we arrive at that as a matter of deduction, but we see that even now in this period when man is not yet highly developed as regards spirituality, there is still a steady progress, even though it may be very slow. We see how soon and how easily, when people begin to understand it, this slow progress may be turned into a rapid forward movement, how soon humanity may be swept onward by a resistless tide in the direction of high spirituality, how soon it may be raised above even

what we should now consider advanced levels of thought. Seeing this, we shall also see that in order to take part in this rapid progress it is necessary for us that we should work out as soon as may be whatsoever of evil still remains as the result of our previous actions. If we have still a debt to pay as the result of past evils, then the sooner we pay off the debt the sooner shall we be free to make this rapid progress, and to devote ourselves to helping other men.

The Explanation of the Text

Now perhaps we shall be able to understand the explanation of that curious text. Suppose that a person is so far advanced that there is left only a sufficient amount of evil karma for this life and for the next one, it would obviously be the best thing that could happen to him that the rest of that evil or suffering which would naturally belong to the next life should be given to him now in this one, so that he might work through it and be ready to start in that next life untrammelled by any evil surroundings or conditions. Sometimes it happens that a man who is of spiritual thought, of clean and pure and unselfish life, finds an extraordinary amount of suffering coming upon him, out of proportion, apparently, to any deserts of his of which he knows anything, and out of proportion to what seems to be falling upon his neighbours. When that is so he may reasonably take comfort to himself from this thought, that because he is living a better life than others, because he is rising somewhat in advance of his fellows, the Lords of Karma have thought him fit to bear more of that which lies behind him than they would otherwise have apportioned to him. They may have originally given to him such an amount of debt to be paid as the ordinary man could bear in a lifetime without bending or breaking under the strain. They find him now to be more than the ordinary man, to be a little stronger and wiser and better than they had expected; so they say in effect, "Here is one who is on the eve of becoming a magnificent channel for the divine strength; there is only a little more of his debt outstanding; let him have an opportunity of paying that here and now, so that in his next life he may have the enormous advantage of not being hindered by any evil circumstances, so that he may then be put in the best condition to use in the highest way all the power and strength for good which he is developing in this life."

That is the real meaning of the idea that "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth;" and it can come to pass only in a case where the man is

already somewhat developed, where he has made the definite choice of good rather than of evil, and has set his affection on things above and not on things of this world. When this truth is recognized, we see at once how small our troubles become. We are glad to have them and to bear them, we take them and use them as a lesson and an opportunity, because we understand why they have come; and if there be more than usual of them, even that very fact is in our favour and not against us. Here is one example of the advantage that we immediately begin to gain from a real grasp of any subject from the Theosophical point of view.

The Destruction of Fear

Another most valuable result of Theosophical study is the absence of fear. Many people are constantly in a condition of anxiety or worry about something or other; lest they fear this or that should happen to them, lest this or that combination may fail, or so all the while they are in a condition of unrest. The majority of their fear is wholly unnecessary, and most of the things feared never come to pass; but nevertheless the fact remains that numbers of people are constantly giving themselves a great deal of unnecessary suffering in this way. Most serious of all for many people is the fear of death. I suppose that the majority of men hardly know how widespread that fear is. A large number of people seem to have it always in their minds as an ever-haunting dread – a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads, ready to fall upon them at any moment.

The whole of that feeling is swept away for the man who understands the Theosophical teaching. When we realize the great truth of reincarnation, when we know that we have often before laid aside physical bodies, then we shall see that death is no more to us than sleep – that just as sleep comes in between our days of work and gives us rest and refreshment, so between these days of labour here on earth which we call lives, there comes the long night of astral and heavenly life to give us rest and refreshment and to help us on our way. To the Theosophist death is simply the laying aside for a time of this robe of flesh. He knows that it is his duty to preserve that bodily vesture as long as he can, to gain all the experience he can; but when the time comes for him to lay it down, he will do so thankfully, because he knows that the next stage will be a pleasanter one than this. Thus he will have no fear of death, although he realizes that he must live his life to the appointed end, because he is here

for the purpose of progress, and that progress is the one important thing. See what a difference that makes in a man's conception of life; the important thing is not to earn so much money, not to obtain such and such a position; the one important thing, when we really comprehend it, is to carry out the divine plan. For this we are here, and everything else should give way to it. It needs only that we shall understand the facts, and all fear at once ceases.

The Apotheosis of Common-sense

Pre-eminently and above all else, Theosophy is a doctrine of common-sense. It puts before us, so far as we can know them, the facts about God and man and the relations between them; and then it instructs us to take these facts into account, and act in relation to them with ordinary reason and common-sense. This is all that it asks from any man as regards life. It suggests to him to regulate his life according to these laws of evolution which it has taught him. That is all, yet it means a great deal; for it gives the man a totally different standpoint, and a touchstone by which to try everything – his own thoughts and feelings, and his own actions first of all, and then those things which come before him in the world outside himself. Always he applies this criterion, is the thing right or wrong? Does it help onward evolution or does it hinder it? If a thought or a feeling arises within himself, he may see at once by this test whether it is one that he ought to encourage. If it is for the greatest good of the greatest number, then all is well; if it may hinder or cause harm to any being in its progress, then it is evil and to be avoided. The same reasoning holds good if he is called upon to decide with regard to anything outside of himself. If from that point of view the thing be a good thing, he can conscientiously support it, if not, then it is not for him.

For the man who sees the truth in this way the question of personal interest does not come into the case at all, and he thinks only of the good of evolution as a whole. This gives the man a definite foothold, a clear criterion, and removes from him the pain of indecision and hesitation. The Will of God is man's evolution; whatever therefore helps on that evolution must be good, whatever stands in the way of it and delays it, that thing must be wrong, even though it may have on its side all the weight of public opinion and of immemorial tradition. It is true that all about us we see infringements of the Divine Law taking place, yet we know that the law is far stronger than the petty wills of those who

ignorantly disobey it; we know that in working along with the law we are working for the future, and that though at the passing moment our efforts may not be appreciated the future will do us justice. Therefore we care little for the judgement of those who do not yet understand, since our knowledge of the governing laws enables us to work in the right direction.

Not only is all fear of death taken away by this doctrine, but our view of life as a whole both on this side of the grave and on the other, is changed and clarified and made reasonable. We realize that this earth-life is only one small part of a greater life, and that although it is true that it has its special importance because it is the seed time of which the after-life is the harvest, still it is only a short time as compared to the life in the heaven-world, and therefore its sorrows are but evanescent sorrows; at the worst its struggles are soon over, whereas what may be gained from it, though not eternal, is enormous in proportion to the time spent in it.

Those who know the Theosophical teaching about death will not be misled by that conventional phrase, "the earth-life." I have explained in *The Other Side of Death* that the dead are not far away beyond the stars, but are here about us all the time; so that when we speak of the earth-life, it is only a conventional term meaning the life in this physical body, because we are just as much in the neighbourhood and in the atmosphere of the earth after death as we were before. The only difference is that we are not tied down to it, not bound to earth in our thoughts and feelings and aspirations. We have cast aside the physical body, and therefore we can rise into higher and finer realms of existence, and in that way we may be said to be symbolically further from earth, even though as a matter of fact and as far as space is concerned we have made no movement at all.

The ordinary orthodox view of life after death is not as it stands a reasonable one; but in the Theosophical teaching we see a coherent and graded ascent of man, first evolving through his physical body, then through the astral, then through the mental, until he rises again into the ego or the true self. The theory is at least a reasonable one, and implies that the same great laws hold good above as below, and it is surely clearer than that which give us a sudden change from the known world working under laws which to some extent we comprehend, into another of which nothing is known and in which no laws seem to operate such as those which here we know as the laws of nature. In Theosophy we bring a grander gospel, we preach a holier creed than that; we hold that nature is

one magnificent whole, and that upon the higher and spiritual planes as well as upon the lower and physical, the will of God is always expressing itself in one undeviating law, just and noble and helpful everywhere – after death just as much as before.

No Religious Worries

Another point which we gain for our Theosophical teachings is that we have no longer any religious fears or worries or troubles. It may perhaps be thought that those do not concern the majority of mankind; but if we come to know anything of the inner life of the most devout and religious people, we shall find that there is a great deal of sorrow and trouble concerned with it. Many of our noblest and best people are constantly worrying themselves, constantly morbidly introspective, constantly fearing whether at the last they may not somehow be cast away; whether they may not fall short, in some way, they scarcely understand how, of the demands which their faith makes upon them.

All that is swept aside when we realize that progress towards the highest is the Divine Will for us; that we cannot escape from that progress; that whatever comes in our way and whatever happens to us is meant to help us along that line; that we ourselves are the only people that can delay our advance. When we really know this, what a difference it makes in the aspect of life! No longer do we trouble and fear about ourselves; we go on and do the duty which comes nearest, in the best way that we can, confident that if we do this, all will be well for us without our perpetually examining and worrying. True, we are told in the wise Greek proverb: "Know thyself." True, it is our business to know ourselves, and to know our own weak points; but that also must be done according to reason and according to common-sense, and, as we have said before, we must not be like those tiny children who, when they plant a garden, are always pulling up their plants to see how much they are growing. That is exactly what so many good people are always doing – they are always pulling themselves up by the roots to see how they are getting on, instead of being satisfied quietly to do their duty, and trying to help their fellows in the race, knowing that the great Divine Power behind will press them onward slowly and steadily and do for them all that can be done, so long as their faces are set steadfastly in the right direction, so long as they do all that they reasonably can.

Another question is as to the condition and fate of those whom we love after they are gone from our sight. There has been much terrible and unnecessary suffering because people worried about the condition of their children, of their parents, of those whom they loved most, because they were always uncertain exactly what was demanded, exactly what obscure conditions they must fulfil in order to grasp this elusive salvation and make certain that they had it. This salvation is thought by a large number of Christians to depend entirely upon one's believing or feeling that one is saved. It is a sort of salvation by hysteria, as it were; a man is saved because he thinks himself saved, because he feels himself so – a very strange idea.

The Certainty of Evolution

We in Theosophy are clear, either for ourselves or (what is still more important) for those whom we love so dearly, of all this trouble about being saved; we know that there is nothing to be saved from except ignorance and error; that there is no wrath of God (impious phrase that it is) from which we are to try to escape; that the world is not governed by some kind of omnipotent demon who is always lying in wait to catch his unfortunate creatures, to cast them into eternal suffering for disobeying laws which they are practically incapable of obeying fully in their present surroundings and stage of evolution. We realize that all that is a childish fable, and that it is also a wicked and blasphemous fable; we know that on the contrary, the world is governed by a grand and beneficent Power whose Will is man's evolution; who is sweeping him ever onward and upward along the course that all must take sooner or later, and the sooner the better, for the Divine Will is that man shall grow. What is our weak will that it should ever prevail against That? We cannot but evolve; we cannot but grow better and better; the only question is, shall we throw ourselves into this great Divine scheme and work willingly with the Great Law which brings us here? If so, then not only will progress be easy for us, but we may be of great help in assisting our fellow creatures in their advance along this upward path; in helping evolution instead of hindering it.

If, on the contrary, we set ourselves vainly and uselessly to struggle against this Divine Will, we shall still be swept on, but at the cost of much suffering, and instead of being helpful to those around us we shall hinder those who are unfortunate enough to fall under our evil influence. The

wicked man, alike with the good man, must eventually pass from the human stage of evolution to a stage to us at present inconceivable. It is only that he gives himself much more trouble on the way; his will, which is set up against the Divine, has to be broken down again and again, until he realizes that he must take his part in the great work for man. So there is no question of salvation. The only question is that the system should be explained to man, that he should be induced to realize it, so that he may throw himself intelligently into the scheme, and work with the great Divine Force instead of against it. It is easy to see what an enormous difference that conception makes in life.

Many of the best people among us are perpetually overcome with the feeling of the sorrow and suffering and misery of the world; they see man fighting and warring in all directions against the good and the true; they see so much evil; that they fear that nothing can be done with the world; they almost despair of Divine Power; and out of that, perhaps has grown up the terrible blasphemy that the Christ, the Saviour of mankind, can succeed in saving only a mere handful, and is obliged to confess failure by allowing nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand to be captured by his supposed enemy! A curious and a most unworthy idea; but people do not realize it. Some rather exult in the selfish thought that only a few are to be saved (so long, be it understood, as they are of the few). The truth is ever grander far than any man's conception of it; and we may well say that the true Christ within us is the Saviour of all; but it is of all, and not only of a few.

This is a scheme, not of occasional and partial salvation, not even of "eternal hope," as Canon Farrar put it, but of eternal certainty. We know that all must, in the end, stand by the side of the Divine. There is no escape from it, because that is His will. Now this removes at once from our horizon all the uncertainty that surrounds religion. In Theosophy we do not hope that we may be saved; we know that eternal advancement and gain will come to all; that progress is a necessity and is the immutable law of the Universe; and that if we do the best that we can under the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we are in a small way helping on that eternal progress of humanity as a whole. And so all those of us who grasp the thing thoroughly are infinitely happier and more contented than those who still grope in that commonplace and truly irreligious condition of uncertainty. We see our way clearly before us. We are fallible and human, like other men, and we often fail to rise to that which we

know; we often fall by the way; we often make mistakes, just as other people do; but this advantage at least we have – that we know what to do; we have the whole thing clear before us; and we do not become the victims of despair because it happens to us as to others to fall away sometimes.

Although a man, having set a goal before himself, may fall a thousand times on the way towards it, yet it would not only be useless, it would be unwise and wrong for him to despair, because each man must always go forward from where he stands; it is no use trying to take someone else's position. If he falls, he picks himself up again; he goes on once more. No matter how often he may fall, still he must get up and go on again, because this road of progress has to be trodden. So it is no use sitting down and saying "I can't." We shall have to do it one time or another, and the sooner we begin, therefore, the better for us – not only because it will be easier for us now than it will be if we leave the effort till later; but chiefly because, if we make the effort now, if we succeed in making some progress, if we rise to some higher level, then we are in a position to hold out a helping hand to those who have not yet reached so high a step of the ladder as we have gained. In that way we can take part in the great divine work of evolution – every one of us, because every person has his own position and his own opportunities; no matter how long his present status may be, there is someone still lower, someone to whom he can hold out a helping hand, someone to whom he can be useful. So it is that at whatever stage of evolution we may be, we can always be of some use in the position in which we then are. Here we have a whole mass of considerations showing us the great advantage that we gain from this Theosophical view of life.

Again, a man has some thought which is constantly in his mind, which is perpetually recurring to him. By the Theosophical teaching, he realizes that he is building up all round him a thought-form which will constantly react upon him, which will tend to set up vibrations similar to its own in his mind-body, and so to recall itself to him again and again, to intensify itself, to become such a habit to him that he will presently find it almost impossible to throw it aside or to get rid of it. Knowing this, he sees the immense importance of controlling his thought, so that he may always surround himself with good and not with evil; with thought-forms that will help on his upward path, and not hinder him or drag him back. And from all this it comes also that nothing is unimportant to him. He learns

that he must be accurate and careful in small matters as well as in great; he sees that though the man of the world may often throw aside the less important matters, as he thinks – although such a man may say to himself, “This work is not well done, but never mind, it will do; we must manage with it” – he realizes that the occult student cannot afford to take that line; that whatever he does, he must do thoroughly; as the Christians tell you, “as unto the Lord and not as unto men.” And that is true, because he does it not that other people may see it; he does it well in order that it may be well done; that the thing to which he has set his hand may be a perfect piece of work, or as nearly perfect as he can make it. He cannot afford to neglect the smaller matters of life, but they also, as far as he does them all, must be well and neatly done, and accurate and pure and true. So we see that the whole of his life is moulded by his Theosophical knowledge.

Our Attitude Towards Humanity

Let us now turn to consider the attitude which he finds himself compelled to adopt toward his fellow-men. He knows that all are truly but one; that on a higher plane where space and time and form as we know them down here do not exist, there is a real spiritual brotherhood. There is more than a brotherhood, there is a unity; and since all are one on those higher spiritual planes, all are truly brothers down here on this plane, however little it may seem so, however little it may be recognized, where race wars against race; where creed hates creed; where classes and castes are ever struggling, the one against the other; where competition is rampant; where dishonesty so often takes the place of fair dealing. Yet when he once realizes this spiritual unity above, he knows that in this world also in real truth, the interest of one can never be opposed to the interest of all; that no true gain can be made by one man which is not made in the name of and for the sake of all humanity; that one man’s progress must be a little lifting of the burden of all others; and that one man’s advance in spiritual things means a slight, yet not imperceptible advance to humanity as a whole; that every one who bears sorrow and suffering nobly in his struggle towards the light is lifting a little of the heavy load of the sorrow and the suffering of his brothers as well.

When he recognizes this brotherhood, not merely as a hope cherished by despairing men, but as a fact following in scientific series from all other facts; when he sees this as a certainty, how different his attitude must be

towards all those round about him – an attitude ever of helpfulness, ever of the deepest sympathy; a realization that nothing which clashes with their higher interest can ever be the right thing for him to do, or can ever be good for him in any way. All this gives him a higher and wider view; and to him the problems of life look far less complicated, and far more hopeful and clear than they seem to the ordinary man.

Thus his attitude towards his fellows will be ever one of the widest tolerance and charity. Tolerance, because his philosophy shows him that it matters little what a man believes, so long as he is a good man and true; charity, because his wider knowledge enables him to make allowance for many things which the ordinary man does not understand. The standard of the occult student as to right and wrong is always higher than that of the less instructed man, yet he is far gentler than the latter in his feeling towards the sinner, because he comprehends more of human nature. He realizes how the sin appeared to the sinner at the moment of its commission, and so he makes more allowances than the man who is ignorant of all this.

He goes further than tolerance, charity, sympathy; he feels positive love towards mankind, and that leads him to adopt a position of ever-watchful helpfulness. The child who deeply loves his mother is always watching for an opportunity of doing some little thing for her – something that he knows will please her or save her trouble. It is just that attitude of watching for an opportunity to help which the occultist adopts towards his fellows. He realizes that every contact with others is such an opportunity. When a new friend comes into his life, when a child is born into his family, when a servant becomes a member of his household, he at once begins to consider what he can do for them, and how he can be a useful influence in their lives.

Theosophy brings him so much additional knowledge, that there is hardly any case in which it does not enable him to give advice or help. Not that it would be wise to be perpetually thrusting his opinions upon people; that is poor and tactless policy; indeed, it is one of the commonest mistakes made by the uninstructed. If the ordinary man happens to have a definite opinion, whether it be upon matters religious, political or social, or upon any of the other subjects of common discussion, he is forever endeavouring to force that opinion upon others and to make them think exactly as he does. The Theosophist knows that all this is a foolish waste

of energy, and therefore he declines to argue. If anyone desires from him explanation or advice he is more than willing to give it; yet he has no sort of wish to convert anyone else to his own way of thinking. There are many cases in which he cannot with advantage say anything, but his life at least shows the advantage of his creed, and is the greatest of all testimonies to the truth of Theosophy ; because men say, "Here is one who is calm and serene in all troubles; here is a man who is ever helpful; who is always thinking, not of himself, but of others. What is the faith, what is the belief that makes him take this line? Surely it must be well worthy of our examination and of our consideration." And so by the example of a noble life we lead others to the same safe harbour of peace which we ourselves have gained.

Even those whom he meets only casually are not overlooked. As I mentioned in a previous lecture, even in riding in a railway carriage or an omnibus, the opportunity to do some good may arise. He may see a man worried or in sorrow, and may send him helpful encouraging thought, and watch him brighten up under its influence. The result is not always immediately apparent, yet the friendly thought has done its work, and we should never forget that that work may be greater than the sender knows. The unfortunate stranger may have been upon the brink of despair, and just that encouraging thought may have saved him from insanity or suicide.

Think what a difference it would make to us if we all regarded life from that point of view – if we went through it looking for opportunities of doing good – asking, not "What can I gain? But, "What can I do?" Such an existence is far more interesting, infinitely fuller and wider than that of the unfortunate who is all the while wrapped up in narrow ideas of personal gain or loss, circumscribed by the limited horizon of his own petty troubles and sorrows.

Thought-Control

Yet another point. The occultist, in his relation to his fellow-men, bears in mind constantly that quest of thought-control of which I spoke. He knows that every thought to which he gives birth ends not with himself, but affects many others as well. He realizes that the vibrations which he sends forth from his mental body are reproducing themselves in the mental bodies of others all about him; that he is a source either of mental health

or of mental ill to all with whom he comes in contact. Consider the condition of a man who is a source of evil thought. Take a simple case; suppose it is merely a man who is a source of low and sensual thought. That man knows that under ordinary conditions he must not allow these low and animal thoughts of his to find vent in words; he must not show to his friends or the community his inner feeling in action, but often he does not realize that even his thought is a plague-spot; that he is going through the world as a centre of moral contagion. It is exactly the same thing, and exactly the same crime as it would be for one of us, who caught some infectious disease, to continue to go about among his fellow-men, with the disease hidden, scattering the seeds of pestilence on all sides. We know that that is a crime; we know that our laws would certainly deal stringently with such a case as that if they could get hold of it. It is a worse crime still for a man to go about scattering moral poison and moral infection, because that is more insidious, more devastating and more difficult to eradicate than any physical disease could be.

Most especially is this a fact to be borne in mind by anyone who has in any way to do with children. Whether he be a parent, a teacher, or a guardian, if his fate brings him into the presence of a child, it is then his business, most emphatically, to set a watch not only over his words and his deeds, but over his thoughts as well. It would be a bad man, as we should all admit, that would give way to angry words or angry deeds before a child. The presence of the child would be a restraining factor. But what we do not realize is that our thoughts before the children have just as great a power; that the child-bodies are plastic and can easily be bent and moulded. A gymnast, for example, can take a little child and can train him to do all sorts of things with his plastic young limbs, which you or I could not now train ourselves into doing, no matter how long we might try. Just as that child's physical body is plastic and easily moulded, so is his astral body – his passions, feelings, and emotions; so is his mental body – the whole realm of his thought. Whenever through any grown-up person there passes a wave of anger or a sensual emotion, assuredly that acts at once upon the plastic astral bodies of any children who are so unfortunate as to be in his neighbourhood; it excites in them a synchronous vibration, a predisposition to the anger or the sensuality, or whatever it may be. It may not be able immediately to call it forth in them, but it sets the vibration going in their astral vehicles, so that the next time any active cause approaches them, that vibration can more easily be aroused in them again.

In the same way, the person whose thoughts are ambitious or selfish or worldly is also a source of evil influence; and if there be children near, be sure that their plastic mental bodies are impressed by it; that they are drinking it all in as a sponge draws up water; and though they are too young directly to reproduce it now, the seed sown will bear fruit in due season. Fortunately that is equally true of good thoughts. The person who surrounds his children with a constant halo of love and of affection will develop the love and affection in the children. The person whose thoughts are noble and unselfish and who takes care that no selfish or unworthy thought shall ever come near his child is at least doing his best to raise high and holy and noble thoughts in that child's mind, so soon as ever it is capable of vibrating in response to them.

It is a terrible sight to anyone who has the clairvoyant vision to see all these beautiful white child-souls and child-auras, and then a few years afterwards to see how they have been soiled and smirched and darkened by the selfish, impure and unholy thoughts of the adults around them. It is only the clairvoyant who knows how enormously and how rapidly child-characters would improve if only adult characters were better.

There again is a subject of vast importance; one upon which I have written elsewhere – that of our relation to children; our duties towards them, and the way in which we are acting upon them whether we will or not; but that is not part of our present subject. Still, we see there again what a fundamental difference the Theosophical teaching makes to a man; how he realizes his responsibilities, and how careful, therefore, he must become as to even his innermost thoughts and feelings, not only for his own sake, but for that of his fellow-men also.

In every relation of life this idea of helpfulness comes in. For example, we have around us a vast animal kingdom brought often into close relation with us. Why is it brought into that relation? Only to offer us an opportunity of doing something for it; for remember that these animals also are our brothers, although they are younger brothers; it is the same Divine Life which animates them, although it is a later wave, a less developed outpouring; still they are our brothers, and we owe a fraternal duty to them also – so to think and act that our relation with them shall always be for their good and not for their harm.

There is no reason why the horse and other creatures should not work for man, because in that working their intelligence and devotion are evoked; always provided that there be no cruelty, no overworking, nothing that can hinder the evolution of the animal, but only that which can help it. The work may be done, and well done, but the animal must always be kindly treated; he must always be encouraged to develop his intelligence and his feeling of love and devotion toward his master.

In so many cases man has misused his relation to the animal kingdom; he has ruled it by fear not by love, he has tortured many of the creatures which serve him, he has trained them into bad habits in order to pander to his own evil passions and his lust for cruelty. He has taken a noble animal like the dog and degraded him below the level of the wolf from which he was evolved; he has taught him to hunt, not for the sake of food, but for the pure lust of killing, which no wild animal ever does; and thus he has created in him an instinct of destruction which it will take many ages and much suffering to eradicate. Never should we develop in any animal the evil qualities of fear, of ferocity, or of hatred, but always intelligence, devotion and love. In all cases and with all forms of life our business is to help, and to try to bring nearer the golden age when all shall understand one another and all shall co-operate in the glorious work that is to come.

Finally, we must regard everything from the higher standpoint and not from the lower; whenever we find a struggle going on within us – that “law of the members warring against the law of the mind,” as St. Paul puts it, we should remember that we ourselves are the higher, and that this, which is the lower, is not the real self, but merely an uncontrolled part of one of its vehicles. We must identify ourselves never with the lower, but always with the higher; we must stand on its side, realizing that the soul is the true man, instead of taking the upside down attitude which is shown in our common expression when we speak of “my soul” as though this body were I, and the soul something belonging to it. Far more true is the Hindu form of speech, “My body is tired; my body is hungry.” However strange it sounds to us, that form of words represents the truth, and ours is entirely wrong. It shows how far the general sense of the time has departed from the true knowledge, when we speak of the soul as an appanage of the body, instead of realizing that the body is only a partial expression of the soul; an instrument which is to be governed by the soul

and kept in order by it, and not allowed, like an unruly horse, to run away from its master.

These are some of the ways in which we find that our belief affects our every-day life; this is something of what we gain from Theosophy. We learn that this grand law of evolution, which is an expression of the Divine Will and Life and Being, is yet something in which we ourselves can take our humble part; that there is not one of us but can be a channel for its power; not one of us but can help in the great work that lies before us. And so we learn to be ever on the watch for opportunities to help; ever ready to render it in the most unexpected directions and to the most unlikely people; because we realize that to help on this magnificent scheme of evolution is to be a fellow-worker with God, a co-operator with the purpose of the Logos; and this we hold to be the highest honour and the greatest privilege that can ever fall to the lot of man.



CHAPTER 14. THE GOSPEL OF WISDOM

The word gospel is usually associated with one particular form of faith only, with one particular story of never-failing interest; so you may perhaps think its use in Theosophical teaching somewhat strange. I think if you will remember the real meaning of the word you will realize that it should not be so monopolised, for after all the gospel is only the “good spell,” or the good news. Theosophy also has its good news to bring you; not the good news of salvation, indeed, but the still greater good news that there is nothing to be “saved” from except your own error and ignorance, that there is no Divine wrath from which you must escape, but that the whole world is moving on in one mighty and glorious order towards an end greater than the mind of man can conceive. This is not a poetic dream, not a mere flight of the imagination, but a certainty which can be seen and known, which can be examined scientifically by those who will take the trouble to prepare themselves for such an investigation. That is one piece of the good news or the gospel which Theosophy has to bring you.

The translation of our name Theosophy is Divine Wisdom, and in the truest sense this divine wisdom has its gospel to bring to you and to everyone. Those of us who have been studying this wonderful philosophy for many years know how truly it has been a gospel to us, for it has changed the whole of our lives, it has taught us how to live and how to die, it has taught us to understand what is the vast scheme of which humanity forms only a small part. The whole world is changed for us because of that knowledge and that wider comprehension. That there is sin, sorrow and suffering in the world we all know well; it seems so sordid, so piteous, so universal, that many of those whose hearts are filled with love and pity and desire to serve feel despair rising within them when they look round and see the condition of the world as it is today. If we had no key to the meaning of it all it would indeed seem that matters are hopeless and that there is nothing to be done, but when once we have the key we begin to understand, and the whole thing takes a different aspect. The great Masters of Wisdom and Compassion who so much desire to serve this orphan humanity, give us a veritable gospel, the good news from on high; for they say to us “Rise above all this, look upon it as a whole, and then you will understand it; do not look up from beneath at the underside of life, but rise above it to the higher planes of thought and consciousness and look down and understand; and then indeed you will

see that there is good news, good news for all. Have you ever seen the great rapids of Niagara? Imagine the condition of some tiny insect swept down amidst the straws and fragments in that seething torrent! Think how it boils and foams and surges round, and think how that tiny insect would regard it all. To him that world of strife and stress would naturally seem all that there was and all that there could be, and as the water dashed backwards and forwards among the rocks he would sometimes feel himself being irresistibly carried up out of his natural course, against the downward current. Yet, if you stand on the banks of that magnificent gorge, and look down on that marvellous maelstrom of water below, you will see that all the time a majestic current is carrying the whole mass in one direction, and that although there may be whirlpools where part of the water seems to be running backwards for the time, in reality the whirlpools and the straws and the insect are all being swept steadily onwards all the while by that tremendous torrent. Just like that is the view of the strife and sorrow and the trouble of this world which opens before the view of the man who raises his consciousness to a higher plane. He sees what seems to you to be evil, and notes how it is apparently pressing upwards against the great current of progress; and yet he sees that the onward sweep of the Divine law of evolution through the world is like that all-prevailing torrent, and that, in comparison to that, all these little backward currents of strife and stress are like the tiny whirlpool on the surface of the vast river, and that even though they seem to be flowing backwards, they are really being swept forwards all the time. But to see that we need the higher sight, we need to stand above the whirlpool of the lower world, we must get beyond the ignorance of that mind which is never steady. These things need the wisdom which comes from the Divine, and that is why it is the Divine Wisdom of Theosophy which brings us the good news that all is well; not only that all will be well in some far-distant future, but that even now at this moment in the midst of all the strife, the omnipotent current is flowing still, and so all is well because all is moving on in perfect order and with perfect certainty.

The sin and the sorrow and the suffering exist; I am not suggesting that these things are an illusion, though I know that that theory has been held by many. True, if we look down from the plane of the spirit we shall see how small all of this is in comparison with the greater life; yet on the physical plane it is true, and while it lasts it is suffering and it is sorrow; and the man who sees most clearly what is the great truth that lies behind

all this, is also the man whose sympathy is the strongest, whose understanding of his weaker brother is the clearest and the fullest, the most pitying and the most forgiving. Indeed, as a French writer has said: "Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner" – to understand all is to pardon all. The man who understands is the one who sympathizes the most fully; he realizes what a sublime gospel this wisdom has brought to him, and what it will bring to these poor sufferers also when they can rise to its comprehension. There is no department of our life in which this good news does not aid us, no moment of our existence at which it does not teach us something. We ourselves may mould our own lives when we understand the laws under which we are living. Even if it were for our own advantage alone, it would be necessary for us that we should grasp this law; but when once we see the transcendent scheme of the Logos, when once the reality and the truth of it all is borne in upon our vision, we forget ourselves and our petty interests, our sorrows and our sufferings. We rise above all thought of ourselves altogether, for we see the great, glorious, all-pervading, all-comprehending, all-satisfying and sustaining life, and it fascinates us with the Divinity and the power of it all. When once we have seen that, we think no more of ourselves for ever, for our thought has risen to a higher level, and all our strength is poured out in the service of our fellow-men.

We must see for ourselves, we must have the Divine Wisdom of Theosophy within us, that gospel must enter into our hearts; and then indeed we shall become preachers of that gospel, whether we will or not. For when we ourselves know this thing, even though we may never speak one word to other men, yet our very lives will show forth the gospel in which we believe, for the joy and the glory of it all will shine through us, and our life will be perfect happiness to ourselves, and a centre of sunlight and blessing to others.

Remember that we have lived before, and that in those past lives there was much that was evil as well as (we hope) much that was good. Because in that past we set causes in motion we must in the present bear their results, for cause and effect are only the positive and negative poles – two sides of the same thing, and therefore part of one another. The effect not only follows from the cause; it is in truth a part of the cause itself, and so if sorrow or suffering comes to us, we know that this is a destiny which we ourselves have made. See what difference this makes in our attitude toward it. We still suffer, but yet we know that this is a debt which we

must pay, and therefore we resolve to clear off that account and to make no more such mistakes. We know that our lives are in our own hands, that we are no more slaves to circumstances, but free men, happy and joyous in the certainty of the Divine scheme. The sorrows of others affect us still, but yet along with our deep sympathy for them we feel within ourselves the joy and the power that come from the knowledge that we can help, that we are no longer crushed in the presence of these great problems of life. When we see our fellow-men we have something new to say to them, we can explain matters to them now, we can clear up their difficulties, we can share our own gospel of wisdom with them. For them, as for us, knowledge will remove difficulties, and will show them that every pain that comes to us is not only the payment of a long-past debt, but is also a great opportunity for us now. Out of the evil of long ago we may make a present good, because we can take these trials and troubles and sufferings and by the way in which we receive them we may make them steppingstones to the higher life, and in bearing them we may develop many of the qualities that go to make up the divine man of the future – a future still far distant, but yet within our sight the moment we begin to understand.

Let me repeat that when we speak of this great scheme we are not trusting to blind faith of any sort, nor are we calling upon you to accept anything as a matter of faith either. We are only stating to you the results of enquiry, which many of us know to be true through personal investigation. You may think: - “How can any man know what the Divine scheme is, how can any man enter into the counsels of God and know what He wills?” True, between that stupendous Divine life and any consciousness of ours there is a distance that cannot be measured, yet we ourselves are sparks of that same Divine flame. Far, far away, incalculably below that mighty Intelligence is the highest intelligence of ours, and yet on every step of the ladder between us and Him stand men – men like ourselves, though so enormously higher than we – up to the great Masters, and on beyond even Them, impossible as it may seem to our finite minds. These stand at every stage of the way, so that we see that those who are now at the very feet of God were once men such as we, and that we who are now looking up from below, from the foot of the glorious staircase, shall also one day stand where these stand. These things we see, and to see them needs no great study and no abnormal development. Much of what we tell you in Theosophy is based upon what is seen with higher faculties than those of the physical body, and thus for

you it depends upon the investigation of a few trained men who have developed within themselves that higher sight; but this mightiest of all truths, the glorious certainty of universal evolution, scarcely needs the abundance of testimony which clairvoyance hastens to lay upon its shrine. Truly those who have the power to see on higher planes will at once agree with this statement that I have made, that they can discern this mighty stream in motion – not that they can see Him, the God who steals behind it all, but that at every point of their investigations they recognize the signs in all directions of His action and His power so that the conviction is driven into their minds that the Force exists, and that a mighty Intelligence is indeed at the back of all manifestation.

The evidence of the trained investigators is overwhelming as to this supreme certainty, this gospel of the Wisdom. But truly, we scarcely need even that testimony. For even from the physical plane one may see the different stages of man; one may see that there are teachers, there are developed men who rise towards the great Initiates, and beyond them the Christ and the Buddhas, and then still higher and higher yet, beyond our ken. Even those who have not yet the clairvoyant faculty will see that there must rise, that there does rise beyond all this, a hierarchy of still more developed beings. We know that there is an evolution, for we see it step by step as it rises through the lower kingdoms up to man, and we can see that the man we know, the man of common every-day life, cannot be the end of that evolution. We know from history that there have been greater and obviously far more developed men; and it is not only in the past, but today also, that they exist. Shall they in turn be the end? No, there are higher and greater Ones still; and so by simple reasoning we see that this wonderful ladder of which I spoke must exist. For those who can see a little further, the testimony is overwhelming that the higher links of this great chain exist, for They can be seen and known and loved.

So we put before our fellow-men without hesitation this glorious gospel, showing them and assuring them of what it has done for us, and hoping that for them, as for us, this grand philosophy may prove a way of salvation, not from some imaginary demon outside of them, but from the ignorance within. For that is the only obstacle that comes to man, the limit with which he has surrounded himself; but that is a terrible shell, and until he breaks his way through it, until he begins to understand, truly he suffers much. Yet the thickness of that shell is of the man's own making, and as soon as he knows that, he sets himself intelligently to

break it away and to prevent the building of any more walls round the self. He has the whole thing in his own hands, under his own control. There is the grandest of futures stretching before him, an evolution of incalculable magnitude, whose glory has no end, which extends far beyond the sight of even the highest clairvoyant. Truly that is good news indeed, that is a veritable gospel – not a mere interpretation of something which may bear some other meaning, not a mere supposition, but a perfect divine certainty, something which will bear examination, which you may take up and investigate for yourselves. The further you look into Theosophy the more sure you will become that this statement is true, that we are in reality part of this vast ordered scheme.

There are many ways in which this good news affects us, many other directions upon which I cannot touch now, in which our lives are revolutionized by understanding these things: vast indeed is the change which Theosophy brings into the life of the man who grasps it and lives it. Remember, I do not say that such a change comes to a man because he joins the Society, or because he reads two or three Theosophical books; but I do say that the man who, understanding this great teaching, tries to live the life which it prescribes, will find that what I have written is true. It is just as sure now as it was in days of old that they who do the will of the Father that is in heaven, they shall know of the doctrine whether it be true. It still is true that the man who would know the truth must live the life. It is not merely by looking upon Theosophy from the outside that its gospel may be known; the man must obey that gospel, and then it will become a part of him, then it will shed its glory upon him, and upon those about him. Then he will realize that it is his duty to be happy, and he will not be carried away by any trouble or sorrow that may come to him, because he knows that his feet stand firm.

Much Theosophical work may thus be done unconsciously, besides our active outer work, and it will increase as our power and our knowledge increase. We are filled with joy and peace because of our study and our reading, and unconsciously we spread around us these vibrations of joy, of happiness and confidence are hungering to understand the life of which they find themselves a part. You may help them, you who know; you may share with them your gospel of wisdom; and be well assured that as you share it, it will become far more to you than ever it was before. Realize the thing for yourself first, for that is a necessity, but remember that only as you pass it on to others can it bear its true and

highest fruit. If you know these things, you know them not for your own sake, but for the sake of these others about you. That is why the higher light has come to you, and if you have found within yourself the power to respond to it and assimilate it, then this has come to you in order that you may be of use – not that you may treasure up the light for yourself, but that through you as centres the sunlight may shine out over all this wide world – so that you yourselves may be suns in a minor way, reflecting the glory of the great Divine Sun. Thus by your reflection you may bring the light of life from Him to play on your own level in a way that without you it could not have done. You know how a mirror may reflect the sunlight into a dark corner where the direct rays cannot enter; just so there are many men who by their own ignorance and their own selfishness have shut themselves out for the time being from the power to appreciate the splendid light from on high. There is the glorious sunlight always pouring itself down, but yet a man may shut himself up in his own house away from that holy radiance; but you who receive it, you who live in it, you may reflect it into corners which the direct rays cannot reach, and so you may bring that glory and that joy into homes that without your help must have remained unwarmed and unilluminated.

There is truly a gospel in all this, teaching us never to forget that though the outer side of life may seem dull and heavy, there is always the Divine fire glowing within; to remember that “the soul of things is sweet, the heart of being is celestial rest; stronger than woe is Will; that which is good doth pass to better, best.”

So this celestial bliss, that lies beyond the sorrow and the suffering, shall become for you the ever-present reality, until you learn to look through the misery and see its cause – and not only to see the cause, but (far beyond that) the exhaustion of that evil through this temporary suffering, and the glory that is to come, the magnificent qualities which all this is developing in the man. So this gospel will become a living reality to you.

So, although you sympathize ever more and more deeply, you will find that you have within you the power to help, to comfort and to save, because you know, because you have this gospel in your hearts, and so you can communicate its light to others. So you will say to them once more, in the words of the greatest Indian teachers:

“Do not complain, and cry and pray, but open your eyes and see; the light is all about you, if you will only remove the bandage from your eyes and look; it is always with you, so wonderful, so glorious, so far beyond anything that man has ever dreamt of or prayed for, and it is forever and forever.”

